

T H E
Barren Fig-Tree ;
O R T H E
D O O M and D O W N F A L L
O F T H E
FRUITLESS PROFESSOR.

Shewing that the day of GRACE may be
past with him, long before his life is ended.

The Signs also, by which such miserable Mor-
tals may be known.

To which is added,
His Exhortation to Peace and Unity among
all that fear GOD.

By *J O H N B U N Y A N.*

Heb. xi. 4. *Who, being dead, yet speaketh,*

G L A S G O W:
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T O T H E
R E A D E R.

Courteous READER,

I Have written to thee now about the barren fig-tree; or, how it will fare with the fruitless professor that standeth in the vineyard of God.

Of what complexion thou art, I cannot certainly divine; but the parable tells thee, that the cumber ground must be cut down.

A cumber-ground professor, is not only a provocation to God, a stumbling-block to the world, and a blemish to religion; but a snare to his own soul also. Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds; yet he shall perish for ever, like his own dung; they that have seen him shall say, where is he? Job xx. 6.

Now they count it pleasure to riot in the day time, 2 Pet. ii. 13, 14. But what will they do when the ax is fetched out?

The tree whose fruit withereth, is reckoned a tree without fruit, a tree twice dead, one that must be plucked up by the roots, Jude 12.

O thou cumber-ground! God expects fruit, God will come seeking fruit shortly.

My exhortation therefore is to professors, that they look to it, that they take heed.

The Barren fig-tree in the vineyard, and the bramble in the wood, are both prepared for the fire.

Profession is not a covert to hide from the eye of God; nor will it palliate the revengeful threatning of his justice, he will command to cut it down shortly.

The church and a profession are the best of places for the upright, but the worst in the world for the cumber-ground: he must be cast, as profane, out of the mount of God, cast, I say, over the wall of the vineyard, there to wither; thence to be gathered and burned. It had been better for them that they had not known the way of righteousness, 2 Pet. ii. 21. And yet if they had not, they had been damned; but it is better to go to hell without, than in, or from under a profession: These shall receive greater damnation, Luke xx. 4.

If thou be a professor, read and tremble: if thou be profane, do so likewise, For if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinners appear? Cumber-ground take heed of the ax; barren fig-tree, beware of the fire.

But



To the READER.

v

But I will keep thee no longer out of the book. CHRIST JESUS, the dresser of the vineyard, take care of thee, dig about thee, and dung thee, that thou mayest bear fruit; that when the Lord of the vineyard cometh with his ax to seek for fruit, or pronounce the sentence of damnation on the Barren Fig-tree, thou mayest escape that judgment. The cumber-ground must to the wood-pile, and thence to the fire. Farewel.

Grace be with all them that love our LORD JESUS in sincerity. Amen.

JOHN BUNYAN.

A 3

T H E

THE BARREN FIG-TREE:

OR,

The DOOM and DOWNFAL of the
Fruitless PROFESSOR.

Luke xiii. 6, 7, 8, 9. A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he to the dresser of the vineyard, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering, said, Lord, let it alone this year also, until I dig about it, and dung it, and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then, after that, thou shalt cut it down.

AT the beginning of this chapter we read how some of the Jews came to Jesus Christ, to tell him of the cruelty of Pontius Pilate in mingling the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices. An heathenish and prodigious



prodigious act: for therein he shewed, not only his malice against the Jewish nation, but also against their worship, and consequently their God. An action, I say, not only heathenish, but prodigious also; for the Lord Jesus paraphrasing upon this fact of his teaching the Jews, that without repentance *they should all likewise perish: likewise*, that is, by the hand and rage of the Roman empire: neither should they be more able to avoid the stroke, than were those “eighteen upon whom “the tower of Siloam fell and slew them, Luke xix. 42, 43, 44.” The fulfilling of which prophecy, for their hardness of heart, and impenitency, was in the days of Titus son of Vespasian, about forty years after the death of Christ. Then I say, were these Jews, and their city, both environed on every side, wherein both they and it to amazement, were miserably overthrown. God gave them sword and famine, pestilence and blood for their outrage against the Son of his love; so “wrath “came on them to the uttermost,” 1 Thess. ii. 16.

Now, to prevent the old and foolish salve which they always had in readiness against such prophecies and denunciations of judgment the Lord Jesus presents them with this parable, in which he emphatically shews them, that their cry of being the temple of the Lord, and of their being the children of Abraham,

ham, &c. and their being the church of God, it would not stand them in any stead, as who should say, it may be, you think to help yourselves against this my prophecy, of your utter and unavoidable overthrow, by the interest which you have in your outward privileges: but all these will fail you: for what think you? "A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none." This is your case, the Jewish land is God's vineyard, I know it, and know also that you are the fig-trees. But, behold there wanteth the main thing, which is fruit; for the sake, and in expectation of which, he set this vineyard with trees. Now, seeing the fruit is not found among you; the fruit, I say, for the sake of which he did at first plant this vineyard; what remains, but that in justice he command to cut you down, as those that cumber the ground, that he may plant himself another vineyard? "Then said he to the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" This therefore must be your end, altho' you are planted in the garden of God; for the barrenness and unfruitfulness of your hearts and lives, you must be cut off, yea, rooted up, and cast out of the vineyard.

In parables there are two things to be taken notice

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notice of, and to be enquired into by them that read.

First, The metaphors made use of.

Secondly, The doctrine, or mysteries couched under such metaphors.

The metaphors in this parable are, (1.) A certain man. (2.) A vineyard. (3.) A fig-tree, barren or fruitless. (4.) A dresser. (5.) Three years (6.) Digging and dunging, &c.

The doctrine or mystery couched under these words, is to shew us, 'What is like to be-
'come of a fruitless or formal professor.' For,

1. By the man in the parable, (Luke xv. 11.) is meant God the Father.

2. By the vineyard, (Isa. v. 7.) His church:

3. By the fig-tree, a professor.

4. By the dresser, the Lord Jesus.

5. By the fig-tree's barrenness, the professor's fruitlessness.

6. By the three years, the patience of God that for a time he extendeth to barren professors.

7. This calling to the dresser of the vineyard to cut it down, is to show the outcries of justice against fruitless professors.

8. The dresser's interceeding, is to show how the Lord Jesus steps in, and takes hold of the head of his Father's ax, to stop or at least to defer present execution on a barren fig-tree.

9. The dresser's desire to try to make the fig-tree fruitful, is to shew you, how unwill-

ing he is that ever a barren fig-tree should yet be barren, and perish.

10. His digging about it, and dunging of it, is to shew his willingness to apply gospel helps to this barren professor, if happily he may be fruitful.

11. The supposition that the fig tree may yet continue fruitless, is to shew, that when Christ Jesus hath done all, "There are some professors will abide barren and fruitless."

12. The termination upon this supposition, at last to cut it down, is a certain prediction of such professors unavoidable and eternal damnation.

But to take this parable into pieces and to discourse more particularly, though with all brevity, upon all the parts thereof.

(A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard.)

The man, I told you, is to present to us God the Father, by which Similitude he is often set out in the New Testament.

Observe then, that it is no new thing if you find in God's church barren fig-trees, fruitless professors; even as here you see is a tree; a fruitless tree, a fruitless fig-tree, in the vineyard. Fruit is not so easily brought forth, as a profession is got into: it is easy for a man to cloath himself with a fair shew in the flesh, to word it, and say, Be thou warmed, and filled with

with the best. It is no hard thing to do these with other things; but to be fruitful, to bring forth fruit to God, this doth not every tree: no not every fig-tree that stands in the vineyard of God. Those words also, (John xv. 2. 'Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away,') assert the same thing. There are branches in Christ, in Christ's body mystical, (which is his church, his vineyard) that bear not fruit, wherefore the head, God, is to take them away. 'I looked for grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes,' Isa. v. 4. That is, no fruit-at all that is acceptable with God. All these, with many more, shew us the truth of the observation, and that God's church may be cumbered with fruitless fig-trees, with barren professors.

Had a (fig tree)

Although there be in God's church that be barren and fruitless; yet as I said, to see to, they are like the rest of the trees, even a fig-tree: 'twas not an oak, nor a willow, nor a thorn, nor a bramble, but a fig-tree, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. 'They come before thee as the people cometh,' Isa. lviii. 2, 3, 4. 'They delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of their God; they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.' And yet but barren,

A 6

fruitless,

fruitless, and unprofitable professors. Judas also was one of the twelve, a disciple, an apostle, a preacher, an officer, yea, and such an one as none of the eleven mistrusted; but preferred before themselves, each one crying out, *Is it I? Is it I?* Mark xiv. 19. None of them as we read of, (John vi. 70.) mistrusting Judas, yet he, in Christ's eye, was the barren fig-tree, a devil, a fruitless professor. The foolish virgins also went forth of the world with the others, had lamps, and light, and were awakened with the other; yea, had boldness to go forth, when the midnight cry was made, with the other and thought that they could have looked Christ in the face, when he sat upon the throne of judgment, with the other; and yet but foolish, but barren fig-trees, but fruitless professors, Matth. vii. 22, 23. Many (saith Christ) will say unto me in that day, this and that, and will also talk of many wonderful works; yet behold, he finds nothing in them but the fruits of unrighteousness: they were altogether barren and fruitless professors.

Had a fig tree (planted.)

This word (planted) doth also reach far; it supposeth one taken out of its natural soil, or removed from the place it grew in once; one that seemed to be called, awakened; and not only so but by strong hand; carried from the world

world, to the church; from nature, to grace; from sin to godliness, Psalm lxxx. 8. 'Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt; thou didst cast out the heathen, and plant it.' Of some of the branches of this vine, were there unfruitful professors.

It must be concluded therefore, that this professor (that remaineth notwithstanding fruitless) is, as to the view and judgment of the church, rightly brought in thither; viz. by confession of faith, of sin, and a shew of repentance and regeneration, (thus false brethren creep in unawares.) All these things this word, planted, intimateth: yea further, that the church is satisfied with them, consents they should abide in the garden, and counteth them sound as the rest. But before God, in the sight of God, they are graceless professors, barren and fruitless fig-trees

Therefore it is one thing to be in the church or in a profession: and another to be of the church and to belong to that kingdom, that is prepared for the saints; that is so indeed. Otherwise, 'Being planted shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither when the east wind toucheth it? It shall wither in the furrows where it grows,' Ezek. xvii. 10.

Had a fig tree planted in (*his*) vineyard.

In (*his*) vineyard. Hypocrites, with rotten hearts, are not afraid to come before God in Zion.

Zion. These words therefore suggest unto us, a prodigious kind of boldness, and hardned fearlessness: for what presumption higher, and what attempt more desperate, than for a man that wanteth grace, and the true knowledge of God, to crowd himself (in that condition) into the house or church of God, or to make profession of, and desire that the name of God should be called upon by him?

For the man that maketh a profession of the religion of Jesus Christ, that man hath as it were, put the name of God upon himself, and is called and reckoned now, (how fruitless soever before God or men) that man hath to do with God, the man that God owneth, and will stand for. This man, I say, by his profession suggesteth this to all that know him, to be such a professor. Men mere y natural, I mean men that have not got the devilish art of hypocrisy, are afraid to think of doing this. 'And of the rest durst no man join himself to them, but the people magnified them,' Acts v. 13. And indeed it displeaseth God: 'They have brought, (saith he) men uncircumcised into my sanctuary.' And again, (Isaiah i. 12.) 'When you come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?' saith God. They have therefore learned this boldness of none in the visible world, they only took it of the devil; for he, and he only (with these his disciples) attempt to present themselves

themselves in the church before God. The tares are the children of the wicked one: The tares, that is the hypocrites that are satan's brood, the generation of vipers that cannot escape the damnation of hell.

(*Had*) a fig-tree planted in his vineyard.

He doth not say he planted a fig-tree, but there was a fig-tree there; he had or found, a fig-tree, planted in his vineyard.

The great God will not acknowledge the barren fig-tree, or barren professor, to be his workmanship, or a tree of his bringing in; only the text saith, he had one there. This is much like that in Matthew, Chap. xv. 13. 'Every plant that my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.' Here again are plants in his vineyard, which God will not acknowledge to be of his planting; and he seems to suggest, that in his vineyard are many such;—Every plant, or all those plants and professors that are got into the assembly of the saints, or into the profession of their religion, without God and his grace shall be rooted up.

'And when the King came to see the guests he saw there a man that had not on a wedding garment: and he said unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?' Mat. xxii. 11, 12. Here is one so cunning and crafty, that he beguiled
all

all the guests; he got and kept in the church even until the King himself came in to see the guests; but his subtilty got him nothing, it did not blind the eyes of the King; it did not prevent the judgment of the righteous; *Friend, how camest thou in hither?* did overtake him at last, even a publick rejection, the King discovered him in the face of all there present: *How camest thou in hither?* My Father did not bring thee hither, I did not bring thee hither, my Spirit did not bring thee hither, thou art not of my heavenly Father's planting.

John x. i. 'He that cometh not in by the door, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.' This text also is full and plain to our purpose; for this man came not in by the door, yet gat into the church, he got in by climbing; he broke in at the windows, he got something of the light and glory of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in his head; and so (hardy wretch that he was) he presumed to crowd himself among the children: but how is this resented what saith the King of him? Why, this is his sign, The same is a thief and a robber. See ye here also, if all such be owned as the planting of God, that get into his church, or a profession of his name.

Had a fig tree, had one without a wedding-garment; had a thief in his garden, at his wedding, in his house: these climbed up
some

some other way. There are many ways to get into the church of God, and profession of his name beside, and without an entring by the door.

1. There is the way of lying and dissembling, and at this gap the Gideonites got in; Joshua ix. 3, 4, &c.

2. There is sometimes falseness amongst some pastors, either for the sake of carnal relations, or the like; at this hole Tobiah, the enemy of God, got in, Nehem. xiii. 4, 5, 6.

3. There is sometimes negligence, and too much uncircumspectness in the whole church, thus the uncircumcised got in; Ezek. xliv. 7, 9.

4. Sometimes again, let the church be never so circumspect, yet these have so much help from the devil, that they beguile them all, and so get in. These are of that sort of thieves that Paul complains of, false brethren brought in unawares, Gal. ii. 3, 4. Jude also cries out of these certain men crept in unawares, Jude 4. Crept in! what, were they so lowly? a voluntary humility, (Col. ii. 22, 23.) a neglecting of the body, not in any humour. O how seemingly self-denying are some of these creeping things, that are yet to be held (as we shall know them) an abomination to Israel, Lev. xi. 43, 44.

* But in great houses, there are not only vessels of gold and silver: but also of wood,
' and

‘and of earth, and some to honour, and some to dishonour,’ 2 Tim. ii. 20. By these words the Apostle seems to take it for granted, that as there hath been, so there still will be these kind of fig-trees, these barren professors in the house, when all men have done what they can, even as in a great house there are always vessels to dishonour, as well as these to honour and glory; vessels of wood, and of earth, as well as of silver and gold; so then there must be wooden professors in the garden of God, there must be earthly, earthen professors in his vineyard: but that methinks, is the biting word, and some to dishonour; that to the Romans is dreadful, Rom. ix. 21, 22. But this seems to go beyond it; that speaks but of the reprobate in general, but this of such and such in particular: that speaks of their hardening in the common way; but this, that they must be suffered to creep into the church; there to fit themselves for their place, their own place, Acts i. 25. the place prepared for them of this sort only; as the Lord Jesus said once of the Pharisees, These shall receive the greater damnation, Luke xx. 47.

Barren fig-tree, fruitless professor, hast thou heard all these things? Hast thou considered that this fig tree is not acknowledged of God to be his, but is denied to be of his planting, and of his bringing unto his wedding? Dost not thou see that thou art called a thief, and
a robber

a robber, that hast either climbed up to, or crept in at another place than the door? Dost thou not hear, that there will be in God's house wooden and earthly professors, that no place will serve to fit those for hell, but the house, church, vineyard of God? Barren fig-tree! fruitless Christian! do not thine ears tingle?

And (*He*) came and sought fruit thereon.

When a man hath got a profession, and is crouded into the church and house of God; the question is not now, has he life? hath he right principles? But hath he fruit? He came seeking fruit thereon. It matters not who brought thee in hither, whether God or the devil, or thine own vain-glorious heart: but hast thou fruit? Dost thou bring forth fruit unto God? 'And let every one that nameth the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, depart from iniquity,' 2 Tim. ii. 19. He doth not say, And let every one that hath grace, or let those that have the Spirit of God; 'But let every one that nameth the name of the Lord Jesus Christ depart from iniquity.'

What do men meddle with religion for? why do they call themselves by the name of the Lord Jesus, if they have not the grace of God, if they have not the Spirit of Christ? God therefore expecteth fruit: What do they do in the vineyard? Let them work or get them:

them: the vineyard must have labourers in it: 'Son go work to day in my vineyard,' Mat. 21, 28. Wherefore, want of grace, and want of spirit, will not keep God from seeking fruit: 'And he came and sought fruit thereon,' Luke viii. 8. He requireth that which he seemeth to have: every man in the vineyard, and house of God, promiseth himself, professeth to others, and would have all men to take it for granted, that an heavenly principle is in him. Why then should not God seek fruit?

As for them therefore that will retain the name of Christians, fearing God and yet make no conscience of bringing forth fruit to him: he saith to such, Away! as for you, go ye serve every one his idols; and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken to me, &c. Ezek. xx. 39. Barren fig-tree! Dost thou hear? God expecteth fruit, God calls for fruit; yea, God will shortly come seeking fruit on this barren fig-tree. Barren fig-tree! either bear fruit or go out of the vineyard, (and yet then thy case will be unspeakably damnable.) Yea, let me add, if thou shalt neither bear fruit, nor depart, God will take his name out of thy mouth, Jer. xlv. 46. He will have fruit. And I say, further, if thou wilt do neither, yet God in justice and righteousness, will still come for fruit. And it will be in vain for thee to count this austerity; 'He will reap where he hath not sowed, and gather where he hath not sowed,'

strawed,' Matth. xxv. 24, 25, 26. Barren fig tree ! dost thou hear?

Q. What if a man hath no grace ?

A. Yes, seeing he hath a profession.

And he came and sought fruit (thereon.)

A church then, and a profession, are not places where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves and sins from God. Some of old thought, that because they could cry, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, therefore they were delivered, or had a dispensation to do the abominations which they committed; as some in our days, For, who (say they) have a right to the creatures if not Christians, if not professors, if not church-members? And from this conclusion, let go the reins of their inordinate affections after pride, ambition, gluttony, pampering themselves without fear, Jude 12. Daunting themselves with the lust, provoking fashions of the times; to walk with stretched out necks, naked breasts, frizled foretops, wanton gestures, in gorgeous apparel, mixed with gold and pearl, and costly array, I will not here make inspection into their lives, their carriages at home, in their corners and secret holes; but certainly persons thus spirited, thus principled, and thus inclined, have but empty boughs, boughs that want the fruit that God expects, and that God will come down to seek.

Barren

Barren fig-tree, thou art not licensed by thy profession, nor by the Lord of thy vineyard, to bear these clusters of Gomorrah; neither shall the vineyard, nor thy being crouded among the trees there, shelter thee from the sight of the eye of God. Many make religion their cloak, and Christ their stalking horse, and by that means cover themselves, and hide their own wickedness from men; but God who seeth their heart hath his print upon the heels of their feet, and pondereth all their goings, and at last, when their iniquity is found to be hateful, he will either smite them with hardness of heart, and so leave them, or awaken them to bring forth fruit. Fruit he looks for, seeks and expects, barren fig-tree!

But, what come into the presence of God to sin? What, come into the presence of God to hide thy sin! Alas man! the church is God's garden, and Christ Jesus is the great Apostle and high priest of our profession. What, come into the house that is called by my name! into the place where mine honour dwelleth! Psalm xxvi. 8. where mine eyes and heart are continually. 1 Kings ix. 3. What come there to sin! to hide thy sin, to cloak thy sin: his plants are an orchard with pleasant fruits, Cant. iv. 13, 14, 15. And every time he goeth into his garden, it is to see the fruits of the valley; and to see if the vines flourish, and if the pomegranates bud,

Yea,

Yea, saith he, he came seeking fruit on this fig tree. The church is the place of God's delight, where he ever desires to be; there he is night and day. He is there to seek for fruit, to seek for fruit of all and every tree in the garden. Wherefore assure thyself, O fruitless one, that thy ways must needs be open before the eyes of the Lord. One black sheep is soon espied, altho' in company with many; that is taken with the first cast of the eye, its different colour still betrays it. I say therefore, a church and a profession, are not places where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves from God that seeks for fruit: My vineyard (saith God) which is mine, is before me Cant. viii. 13.

And he came and sought fruit thereon, (and found none.)

Barren fig-tree, hearken; The continual nonbearing of fruit, is a dreadful sign that thou art come to a dreadful end, as the winding up of this parable concludeth.

And found none) None at all, or none to God's liking; for when he saith, he came seeking fruit thereon, he means fruit meet for God, Heb. vi. pleasant fruit, fruit good and sweet.

Alas! it is not any fruit will serve; bad fruit is counted none; 'Every tree that bringeth

'eth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and
'cast into the fire,' Matth. iii. 10.

1. There is fruit among professors that withers, and so never comes to be ripe: a fruit that is smitten in the growth, and comes not to maturity, and this is reckoned no fruit. This fruit, these professors bear, that have many fair beginnings or blossoms; that make many fair offers of repentance and amendment; that begin to pray, resolve, and to break off their sins by righteousness; but stop at those beginnings, and bring no fruit forth to perfection. This man's fruit is withered, wrinkled, smitten fruit, and is in effect no fruit at all.

2. There is an hasty fruit, such as is the corn upon the house top, Psalm cxxix. or that which springs up on the dunghill, that runs up suddenly, violently, with great stalks, and big shew, and yet at last proves empty of kernel: This fruit is to be found in those professors, that on a sudden are so awakened, so convinced, and so affected with their condition, that they shake the whole family, the end ship, the whole town. For a while they cry hastily, vehemently, dolefully, mournfully, and yet all is but a pang, an agony, a fit, they bring not forth fruit with patience; these are called those hasty fruits, 'that shall be as a fading flower,' Isa. xxviii. 4.

3. There is a fruit that is vile, and ill-tasted,

tailed, Jer. xxiv. how long soever it be in growing; the root is dried, and cannot convey a sufficiency of sap to the branches to ripen the fruit. These are the fruits of such professors, whose heart is estranged from communion with the holy Ghost, whose fruit groweth from themselves, from their parts, gifts, strength of wit, natural or moral principles: these, notwithstanding they bring forth fruit, are called empty vines, such as bring not forth fruit to God.

‘ Their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit; yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb,’ Hosea ix. 16.

4. There is a fruit that is wild; ‘ I looked for grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes,’ Isa. v. 4. I observe, that as there are trees and herbs that are wholly right and noble, fit indeed for the vineyard; so there are also their *semblance*, but wild; not right, but ignoble. There is the grape and the wild grape; the vine, and the wild vine; the rose and the ranker rose; flowers, and wild flowers; the apple, and the wild apple, which we call the crab. Now fruit from these wild things, however they may please the children to play with, yet the prudent and the grave count them of little or no value. There are also in the world a generation of professors, that notwithstanding their profession, are wild by nature:

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yea,

yea, such as were never cut out, or off, from the wild olive tree, nor never yet planted in, to the good olive tree. Now these can bring nothing forth, but wild olive berries, they cannot bring forth fruit unto God. Such are all those that have lightly taken up a profession, and crept into the vineyard without a new birth, and the blessing of *Regeneration*.

5. There is also untimely fruit; 'Even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs,' Rev. vi. 13. Fruit out of season, and so no fruit to God's liking.

There are two sorts of professors subject to bring forth untimely fruit.

1. They that bring forth (fruit) too soon.

2. They that bring forth (fruit) too late.

1. They that bring forth too soon: they are such as at present receive the word with joy; and anon, before they have root downwards, they thrust forth upwards; but having not root, when the sun ariseth they are smitten, and miserably die without fruit. These professors are those light and inconsiderate ones, that think nothing but peace will attend the gospel; and so anon rejoice at the tidings without foreseeing the evil; wherefore when the evil comes, being unarmed, and so not able to stand any longer, they die, and are withered, and bring forth no fruit. 'He that receiveth seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon withereth.'

joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended,' Matth. xiii. 20, 21. There is (in Isaiah xxviii. 4.) mention made of some, whose glorious beauty shall be a fading flower: because it is fruit before summer. Both these are untimely fruit.

2. They also bring forth untimely fruit, that stay till the season is over. God will have his fruit in his season; I say, he will receive them of such men as shall render them to him in their seasons, Matth. xxi. 41. The missing of the season is dangerous, staying till the door is shut is dangerous, Matth. xxv. 10, 11. Many there be that come not till the flood of God's anger is raised, and too deep for them to wade: Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him,' Psalm xxxii. 6. Esau's (afterward) is fearful; for ye know how that afterward when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears, Heb. xii. 16, 17.

So the children of Israel, they brought to God the fruits of obedience too late: their, Lo, we be here, (Numb. xiv. 40, 41, 42.) came too late: their we will go up, came too late: the Lord hath sworn before, verse 23, 30. That they should not possess the land. All these are such as bring forth untimely fruit,

Heb. xii. 17. Luke xiii. 25, 26, 27. It is the hard hap of the reprobate, to do all things too late; to be sensible of his want of grace too late; to be sorry for sin too late: to seek repentance too late; to ask for mercy, and to desire to go to glory too late.

1. Thus you see that fruit smitten in the growth, that withereth, and that comes not to maturity, is no fruit.

2. That hasty fruit, such as the corn upon the house top. Psalm cxxix. 6. withereth also afore it groweth up, and is no fruit.

3. That the fruit that is vile and ill-tasted, is no fruit.

4. The wild fruit and wild grapes, Rev. vi. are no fruit.

5. That untimely fruit, such as come too soon, or that comes too late: such as come not in their season, are no fruit.

And he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

Nothing will do but fruit, Matth. xxi. 34. He looked for grapes: when the time of fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen that they might receive the fruit of it.

Quest. But what fruit doth God expect?

Answ. Good fruit: 'Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down,' Mat. vii. 19. Now before the fruit can be good, the tree must be good, for good fruit makes not a good

a good tree, but a good tree bringeth forth good fruit: do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? A man must be good, else he can bring forth no good fruit; he must have righteousness imputed, that he may stand good in God's sight from the curse of the law. He must have a principle of righteousness in his soul, else how should he bring forth good fruits? And hence it is that a Christian's fruits are called, Gal. v. 22. 23 The fruits of the Spirit, and the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, Phil. i. 12. The fruits of the Spirit, therefore the Spirit must be there: the fruits of righteousness, therefore righteousness must be first there. But to particularize in a few things briefly.

First, God expecteth fruit that will answer and be worthy of that repentance thou feignest thyself to have. Every one in a profession, and that hath crowded into the vineyard pretendeth to repentance; now, of every such soul, God expecteth that the fruits of repentance be found to attend them, Matth. iii. 8.

Bring forth fruits therefore meet for repentance, or answerable to thy profession of the doctrine of repentance. Barren fig-tree, seeing thou art a professor and got into the vineyard, thou standest before the Lord of the vineyard, as one of the trees of the garden, wherefore he looked for fruit from thee, as from the rest of the trees in the vineyard: fruits I say,

and such as may declare thee in heart and life, one that hath made sound profession of repentance. By thy profession thou hast said, I am sensible of the evil of sin: now then, live such a life, as declares that thou art sensible of the evil of sin. By thy profession thou hast said, I am sorry for sin: why then live such a life as may declare this sorrow. By thy profession thou hast said, I am ashamed of my sin, Psal. xxxviii. 18. yea, but live such a life that men by that may see thy shame for sin, Jer. xxxi. 19. By thy profession thou sayest, I have turned from, left off, and am become an enemy to every appearance of evil, 1 Thess. v. 22. Ah! But doth thy life and conversation declare thee to be such an one? Take heed, barren fig-tree, lest thy life should give thy profession, the lie: I say again, take heed for God himself will come for fruit: And he sought fruit thereon.

You have some professors, that are only saints before men, when they are abroad, but are devils and vipers at home; saints by profession, but devils by practice; saints in word, but sinners in heart and life. These men may have the profession, but they want the fruits that become repentance.

Barren fig-tree, Can it be imagined that those that paint themselves did ever repent of their pride? or that those that pursue this world did ever repent of their covetousness! or that those

those that walk with wanton eyes, did ever repent of their fleshly lusts? Where, barren fig-tree, is the fruit of these people's repentance? Nay, do they not rather declare to the world; that they have repented of their profession! Their fruits look as if they had. Their pride saith, they have repented of their humility: their covetousness declareth, that they are weary of depending upon God: and doth not thy wanton actions declare that thou abhorrest chastity? Where is thy fruit: barren fig-tree! repentance is not only a sorrow, and a shame for, but a turning from sin to God, Heb. vi. It is called repentance from dead works. Hast thou that godly sorrow that worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of? 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11. How dost thou shew thy carefulness, and clearing of thyself? thy indignation against sin; thy fear of offending: thy vehement desire to walk with God; thy zeal for his name, and glory in the world? And what revenge hast thou in thy heart against every thought of disobedience?

But where is the fruit of thy repentance? Where is thy watching, thy fasting, thy praying against the remainders of corruption? Where is thy self abhorrence: thy blushing before God, for thy sin that is yet behind? Where is thy tenderness of the name of God and his ways? Where is thy self-denial and contentment? How dost thou shew before

men the truth of thy turning to God? Hast thou renounced the hidden things, of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness? 2 Cor. iv. 2. canst thou commend thy self to every man's conscience in the sight of God?

And he sought fruit (thereon.)

Secondly, God expecteth fruits that shall answer that faith which thou makest profession of. The professor that is got into the vineyard of God, doth feign that he hath the faith most holy, the faith of God's elect. Ah! But where are thy fruits, barren fig-tree? The faith of the Romans was spoken of throughout the whole world, Rom. i. 18. and the Thessalonians faith grew exceedingly, 2 Thess. i. 3.

Thou professest to believe thou hast a share in another world, hast thou let go this barren fig-tree? Thou professest thou believest in Christ. Is he thy joy, and the life of thy soul? Yea, what conformity unto him, or his sorrows and sufferings? What resemblance hath his crying and groaning, and bleeding, and dying, wrought in thee? Dost thou bear about in thy body the dying of the Lord Jesus? And is also the life of Jesus made manifest in thy mortal body? 2 Cor. x. 11. Barren fig-tree, shew me thy faith by thy works; shew out of a good conversation thy works with meekness of wisdom, James ii 18. and iii. 13.

What

What fruit, barren fig-tree? What degree of heart-holiness? For faith purifies the heart, Acts xv. 9. What love to the Lord Jesus? for faith worketh by love, Gal. v. 6.

Thirdly, God expecteth fruits, according to the season of graces thou art under, according to the rain that cometh upon thee. Perhaps, thou art planted in a good soil, by great waters, that thou mightest bring forth branches, and bear fruit; that thou mightest be a goodly vine or fig-tree: shall he not therefore seek for fruit, for fruit answerable to the means? Barren fig-tree, God expects it, and will find it too, if ever he bless thee: 'For the earth which drinks in the rain that comes oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for him by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned,' Heb. vi. 7, 8.

Barren soul, How many flowers of grace, how many dews from heaven, how many times have the silver streams of the city of God; run gliding by the roots, to cause thee to bring forth fruits? These showers and streams, and drops that hang upon thy boughs, will all be accounted for: and will they not testify against thee, that thou oughtest of right to be burned? Hear and tremble. O thou barren professor! fruits that become thy profession of the gospel, the God of heaven

ven expecteth. The gospel hath in it the forgiveness of sins, the kingdom of heaven, and eternal life: but what fruit hath thy profession of a belief of these things put forth in thy heart and life? Hast thou given thyself to the Lord; and is all that thou hast to be ventured for his name in this world? Dost thou walk like one that is bought with a price, even the price of precious blood?

Fourthly, The fruit that God expecteth is such as is meet for himself, fruit that may glorify God. God's trees are trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified; fruit that tasteth of heaven, abundance of such fruit: 'For herein (saith Christ) is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit,' John xv. 8. Fruits of all kinds new and old; the fruits of the Spirit are in all goodness, and righteousness and truth, fruits before the world, fruits before the saints, fruits before God, fruits before angels.

O my brethren! What manner of persons ought we to be; who having subscribed to the Lord, and have called ourselves by the name of Israel? 'One shall say I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob: and another shall subscribe with his hand to the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel,' Isaiah xlv. 5. Barren fig tree, Hast thou subscribed? Hast thou called thyself by the name of Jacob, and surnamed

named thyself by the name of Israel? All this thou pretendest to, who art got into the vineyard, who art placed among the trees of the garden of God. God doth therefore look for such fruits as is worthy of his name, as is meet for him: as the apostle saith, we should walk worthy of God; that is, so as we may shew in every place, that the presence of God is with us, his fear in us, and his Majesty and authority upon our actions. Fruits meet for him, such a dependance upon him, such trust in his word, such satisfaction in his presence, such a trusting of him with all my concerns, and such delight in the enjoyment of him, that may demonstrate that his fear is in my heart, that my soul is wrapped up in his things, and that my body, and soul, and estate, and all, are in truth thro' his grace, and at his dispose. Fruits meet for him: hearty thanks, and blessing God for Jesus Christ, for his good word, for his free grace, for his discovery of himself in Christ to the soul, secret longing after another world. Fruit meet for him, liberality to the poor saints, to the poor world; a life in word and deed exemplary; a patient and quiet enduring of all things, till I have done and suffered the whole will of God, which he hath appointed for me. 'That on
' the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word
' keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience,'

Luke viii. 15. This is bringing forth fruit unto God; 'Having our fruit unto holiness, and 'our end everlasting life,' Rom. vii. 4. and vi. 22. and xiv. 8.

Fifthly, The Lord expects fruit becoming the vineyard of God: The vineyard (saith he) Isa. v. 1. is a very fruitful hill: witness the fruit brought forth in all ages. The most barren trees that ever grew in the wood of this world, when planted in the vineyard by the God of heaven, what fruit to God-ward have they brought forth? Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice, Heb. xi. 4. Enoch walked with God three hundred years, ver. 5. Noah, by his life of faith, contemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith, ver. 7. Abraham left his country, and went out after God, not knowing whither he went, ver. 8. Moses left a kingdom, and run the hazard of the wrath of the king, for the love he had to God in Christ. What shall I say of them who had trials, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection? Heb. xi. 35, 36, 37. 'They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, 'were tempted, were slain with the sword: they 'wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, 'being destitute, afflicted, tormented.' Peter left his father, ships and nets, Matth. iv. 18, 19. Paul turned off from the feet of Gamaliel. Men brought their goods and possessions (the

(the price of them) and cast it down at the apostles feet, Acts xiv. 18, 19, 20. and others brought their books together, and burnt them, curious books, though they were worth fifty thousand pieces of silver, I could add, how many willingly offered themselves in all ages, and their all, for the worthy name of the Lord Jesus, to be racked, starved, hanged, burned, drowned, pulled in pieces, and a thousand calamities. Barren fig-tree, the vineyard of God hath been a fruitful place; what dost thou there? What dost thou bear? God expects fruit according to, or becoming the soil of the vineyard.

Sixthly, The fruit which God expecteth is such as becometh God's husbandry, and labour; the vineyard is God's husbandry, or tillage, *I am the vine* (saith Christ) John xv. 1. *and my Father is the husbandman.* And again, 1 Cor. iii. 9. *Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.* The vineyard, God fences it, God gathereth out the stones, God builds the tower and the wine press in the midst thereof. Here is labour, here is protection, here is removing of hindrances, here is convenient purgation, and all, that there might be fruit.

Barren fig-tree, what fruit hast thou? Hast thou fruit becoming the care of God, the protection of God, the wisdom of God, the patience and husbandry of God? It is the fruit of the vineyard, that is either the shame or
praise

praise the husbandman. 'I went by the field
 ' of the slothful (saith Solomon) and by the
 ' vineyard of the man void of understanding;
 ' and lo, it was grown over with thorns, and
 ' nettles had covered the face thereof,' Prov.
 xxiv. 30, 31, 32.

Barren fig-tree, If men should make a judgment of the care, and pains, and labour of God in his church, by the fruit that thou bringest forth, what might they say? Is he not slothful? Is he not careless? Is he not without? O! thy thorns and nettles, thy barren heart, and barren life, are a continual provocation to the eyes of his glory, as likewise a dishonour to the glory of his grace.

Barren fig-tree, Hast thou heard all these things? I will add yet one more.

And he came and sought fruit thereon.

The question is not now, what thou thinkest of thyself, nor what all the people of God think of thee; but what thou shalt be found in that day, when God shall search thy boughs for fruit. When Sodom was to be searched for righteous men; God would not in that matter trust his faithful servant Abraham; but still as Abraham interceded, God answered, *If I find fifty, or forty and five, then I will not destroy the city*, Gen. xviii. 20, 21, 26, 27. Barren fig-tree, what sayest thou? God will come down to see, God will make search for fruit himself.

And

And he came and sought fruit thereon, and found (none.) Then said he to the dresser of the vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?

These words are the effect of God's search into the boughs of a *barren fig tree*; he sought fruit, and found *none*, none to his liking, none pleasant and good. Therefore, First, he complains of the want thereof to the dresser, calls him to come and see, and take notice of the tree; then signifieth his pleasure, he will have it removed, taken away, cut down from cumbering the ground.

Observe, The barren fig-tree is the object of God's displeasure, God cannot bear with a fruitless professor.

(Then) said he, &c.

Then, after this provocation: *then* after he had sought, and found no fruit, *then*. This word (*then*) doth shew us a kind of an inward disquietness; as he saith also in another place, upon a like provocation, *Then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy, shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall ly upon him; and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven*, Deut. xxix. 18, 19, 20.

Then, It intimateth that he was now come to a point, to a resolution what to do with this

this fig-tree. *Then said he to the Dresser of the vineyard,* that is, to Jesus Christ, Behold, as much as to say, come hither, here is a fig-tree in my vineyard, here is a professor in my church, that is barren, that beareth no fruit.

Observe, However the barren professor think of himself on earth, the Lord cries out in heaven against him, Isa. v. 5. 'And now go to, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard, I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up: and I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down,' *Behold these three years I come seeking fruit, &c.*

Observe, these three years. God cries out that his patience is abused, that his forbearance is abused: 'Behold, these three years I waited, forborn these three years, I have deferred mine anger; Therefore I will stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary with repenting,' Jer. xv. 6,

These three years, Observe, God layeth up all the time; I say a remembrance of all the time, that a barren fig-tree, or a fruitless professor mispendeth in this world: as he saith also of Israel of old, 'Forty years long was I grieved with this generation,' Psalm xcv. 10.

These three years, &c.

These three seasons, Observe, God remembers how many seasons thou hast mispent; for these three years signifieth so many seasons. And when the time of the fruit drew nigh,
that

that is, about the season they begin to be ripe, or that according to the season might so have been. Barren fig-tree, thou hast had time, seasons, sermons, ministers, afflictions, judgments, mercies, and what not? And yet hast not been fruitful; thou hast had awakenings, reproofs, threatnings, comforts, and yet hast not been fruitful; thou hast had parents, examples, citations, provocations, and yet hast not been fruitful. Well, God hath laid up thy three years with himself; he remembers every time, every season, every sermon, every minister, affliction, judgment, mercy, awakening, pattern, example, citation, provocation, he remembers all: As he said of Israel of old, 'They have tempted me these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice,' Num. xiv. 22. And again, 'I remember all their wickedness,' Hos. viii. 2.

These three years, &c.

He seeks for fruit of every season: he will not that any of his sermons, ministers, afflictions, judgments or mercies should be lost, or stand for insignificant things; he will have according to the benefit bestowed, 2 Chr. xxxii. 24. 25. Ezek. xiv. 23. He hath not done without a cause all that he hath done, and therefore he looketh for fruit. Look to it, Barren fig-tree.

I came (seeking) fruit.

Observe, This word (seeking) signifies a narrow

narrow search; for when a man seeks for fruit on a tree, he goes round it and round it, now looking into this bough, and then into that: he peeps into the inmost boughs, and the lowermost boughs, if perhaps fruit may be thereon.

Barren fig-tree, God will look into all thy boughs, he will be with thee in thy bed-fruits; thy midnight fruits, thy closet fruits, thy family fruits, thy conversation fruits, to see if there be any among all these that are fit for, or worthy of the name of the God of heaven. He sees what the children of Israel do in the dark, Ezek. viii. 12. All things are open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do, Heb. iv. 12, 13.

Seeking fruit on (this) fig-tree.

I told you before that he keeps in remembrance the times and seasons that the barren professor had wickedly mispent. Now, forasmuch as he pointeth out the fig-tree, this fig-tree; it sheweth that the barren professor above all professors, is a continual odium in the eyes of God: this fig-tree, this man Coniah, Jer. xxii. 28. This people draw nigh to me with their mouth, but have removed their hearts far from me. God knows who they are among all the thousands of Israel; that are the barren and fruitless professors; his lot will fall upon the head of Achan, tho' he be hid among six hundred thousand men. 'And he brought his

‘ his household, man by man; and Achan the
‘ son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of
‘ Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken,’
Josh. vii. 17, 18. This is the Achan, this is
the fig-tree, this is the barren professor.

There is a man hath an hundred trees in
his vineyard, and at the time of the season he
walketh into his vineyard to see how the tree
flourish; and as he goes, and views, and pries,
and observes how they are hanged with fruit;
behold, he comes to one where he findeth
nought but leaves: Now he makes a stand,
looks upon it again; he looks also here and there,
above and below; and if, after all this seeking,
he finds nothing but leaves thereon, then he
begins to cast in his mind, how he may know
this tree next year, what stands next it, or
how far it is off the hedge; but if there be
nothing that may be as a mark to know it by,
then, he takes his hook, and giveth it a pri-
vate mark, (And the Lord set a mark upon
Cain, Gen. iv.) saying, go thy ways, fruitless
fig-tree, thou hast spent this season in vain.

Yet doth he not cut it down, I will try it
another year; may be this was not a hitting
season; therefore he comes again next year
to see if now it have fruit: but as he found
it before, so he finds it now, Barren, barren,
every year barren; he looks again, but finds
no fruit. Now he begins to have second
thoughts; how! neither hit last year, nor
this;

this; surely the barrenness is not in the season, surely the fault is in the tree: however I will spare it this year also, but will give it a second mark: and it may be, *he toucheth it with a hot iron*, because he begins to be angry.

Well, at the third season he comes again for fruit, but the third year is like the first, and second, no fruit yet; it only cumbereth the ground: what now must be done with this fig-tree? Why, *The Lord will lop his boughs with terror*; yea, the thickets of these professors with iron. I have waited (saith God) *these three years*; I have missed of fruit *these three years*, it hath been a *cumber-ground these three years*; *cut it down*. Precept had been upon precept, and line upon line, one year after another; for these three years, but no fruit can be seen; I find none, fetch out the ax; I'm sure this is the fig-tree, I knew it from the first year, barrenness was its sign then, barrenness is its sign now, make it fit for the fire. 'Behold, the ax is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire,' Matth. iii. 10.

Observe, my brethren, God's heart cannot stand towards a barren fig-tree. You know thus it is with yourselves; if you have a tree in your orchard, or vineyard, that doth only cumber the ground, you cannot look upon that tree with pleasure, with complacency and delight:

delight: no, if you do but go by it, if you do but cast your eyes upon it; yea, if you do but think of that tree, you threaten it in your heart, saying, I will hew thee down shortly, I will ~~the~~ fire with thee shortly. And it is in vain any to think of persuading of you to shew ~~our~~ to the barren fig-tree; and if they should ~~persuade~~, your answer is irresistible, It yields me no profit, it takes up room, and doth no good, a better may grow in its room.

Cut it down.

Thus when the godly among the Jews, Jer. xiv. 17. made prayers, that rebellious Israel might not be cast out of the vineyard, what saith the answer of God? Jer. xv. 1. Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet could not my mind be towards this people; wherefore cast them out of my presence and let them go forth.

What a resolution is here? Moses and Samuel could do almost any thing with God in prayer. How many times did Moses by prayer turn away God's judgments from even Pharaoh himself? Yea, how many times did he by prayer preserve Israel, when in the wilderness Psal. cvi. 23. from the anger and wrath of God; Samuel is reckoned excellent this way, yea, so excellent, that when Israel had done that fearful thing, as to reject the Lord, and chuse them another king, 1 Sam. xii. he prayed,
and

and the Lord spared and forgave them. But yet neither Moses, nor Samuel, can save a barren fig-tree: no, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, that is, pleading, arguing, interceding, supplicating, and beseeching, yet could they not incline my heart to this people.

Cut it down.

Ah! but Lord, it is a fig-tree; a fig-tree! if it was thorn, or bramble, or a thistle, the matter would not be much; but it is a fig-tree, or a vine; well, but mark the answer of God, Ezek. xv. 2, 3. ‘Son of man, what is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch that is among the trees of the forrest? shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin thereof to hang any vessel thereon?’ If trees that are set or planted for fruit, bring not forth that fruit, there is betwixt them and the trees of the forrest, no betterment at all: unless the betterment lyeth in the trees of the wood, for they are fit to build withal: but a fig-tree or a vine, if they bring not forth fruit, yea, good fruit, they are fit for nothing at all, but to be cut down, and prepared for the fire. And so the prophet goes on, ‘Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; if it serve not for fruit, it will serve for fuel, and so the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the middle of it is burnt.’

Ay, but these fig-trees and vines are church-members,

members, inhabitants of Jerusalem. So was the fig-tree mentioned in the text: but what answer hath God prepared for these objections! Why, ver. 6. 7. 'Thus saith the Lord God, as the vine tree among the trees of the Forrest, which I have given to the fire for fuel: so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And I will set my face against them, they shall go from one fire, and another fire shall devour them.'

Cut it down.

The woman that delighteth in her garden, if she have a slip there, suppose (if it was fruitful) she would not take five pounds for it; yet if it bear no fruit, if it wither and dwindle, and die, and turn cumber-ground only, it may not stand in her garden. Gardens and vineyards are places for fruit, for fruit according to the nature of the plant or flowers. Suppose such a slip as I told you of before, should be in your garden, and there die, would you let it abide in your garden? No, away with it, away with it. The woman cometh into the garden towards the spring, where first she gives it a slight cast with her eye, then she sets to gathering out the weeds, and nettles, and stones; takes a besom and sweeps the walks; this done, she falls to prying into her herbs and slips, to see if they live, to see if they are likely to grow: now, if she comes
to

to one that is dead, that she is confident will not grow, up she pulls it, and makes to the heap of rubbish with it, where she despisingly casts it down, and valueth it no more than a nettle, or a weed, or than the dust she hath swept out of her walks. Yea if any that see her, should say, why do you so? the answer is ready, it is dead, it is dead at the root; if I had let it stand, it would but have cumbered the ground. The strange slips (and also the dead ones) 'They must be a heap in the day of grief, and of desperate sorrow,' Isa. xvii. 10, 11.

Cut it down.

There be two manners of cutting down :

First, When a man is cast out of the vineyard.

Secondly, When a man is cast out of the world.

First, When a man is cast out of the vineyard. And that is done two ways.

1. By an immediate hand of God.
2. By the church's due execution of the laws, and censures, which Christ for that purpose, hath left with his church.

First, God cuts down the barren fig-tree by an immediate hand, smiting his roots, blasted his branches, and so takes him away from among his people: 'Every branch, (saith Christ,) that beareth not fruit in me, he (my Father) taketh away,' John xv. 2. He taketh him out of the church, he taketh him away from

from the godly. There are two things by which God taketh the barren professor from among the children of God.

First, Strong delusions.

Secondly, Open profaneness.

First, By strong delusions, Such as beguile the soul with damnable doctrines, that swerve from faith and holiness, Isa. lxi. 3, 4. They have chosen their own ways, (saith God) and their soul delighteth in their abominations: I also will chuse their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them. I will smite them with blindness and hardness of heart, and sealing of eyes, and will also suffer the tempter to tempt and effect his hellish designs upon them. 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12. *God will send them strong delusions that they may believe a lie, that they all may be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

Secondly, Sometimes God takes away a barren professor by open profaneness. There is one hath taken up a profession of that worthy name, The Lord Jesus Christ; but this profession is but a cloak, he secretly practiseth wickedness; he is a glutton, or a drunkard, or covetous, or unclean; well, saith God, I will loose the reins of this professor, I will give him up to his vile affection, I will loose the reins of his lusts before him, he shall be entangled with his beastly lusts, he shall be overcome of ungodly company. Thus they that

turn aside to their own crooked ways, Psalm cxxv. 5. 'The Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.' This is God's hand immediately; God is now dealing with this man himself. Barren fig-tree, hearken, thou art crouded into a profession, art got among the godly, and there art a scandal to the holy and glorious gospel; but withal so cunning, that like the sons of Zeruah, thou art too hard for the church; she knows not how to deal with thee. Well, saith God, I will deal with that man myself, Ezek. xiv. 7, 8. *I will answer that man myself*: He that sets up his idols in his heart, and puts the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes and appears before me: I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and he shall know that I am the Lord.

But, Secondly, God doth sometimes cut down the barren fig-tree by the church, by the church's due execution of the laws and censures, which Christ for that purpose, hath left with his church: this is the meaning of that in Matth. xviii. 1 Cor. v. and that in 1 Tim. i. 20. Upon which now I shall not enlarge. But which way soever God dealeth with thee, O thou barren fig-tree, whether by himself immediately, or by his church it amounts to one and the same. For if timely re-

penitance

penitance prevent not, the end of that soul is damnation. They are blasted and withered and gathered by men God's enemies; and at last cast into the fire, ' Burning must be their end. That which beareth briers and thorns, ' is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be ' burned,' Heb. vi. 8.

And again sometimes by, cut it down, God means, cast it out of the world: thus he cut down Nabab and Abihu, when he burned them up with fire from heaven, Num. xvi. 31, 32, 33. Thus he cut down Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, when he made the earth to swallow them up. Thus he cut down Saul, 1 Sam. xxxi. 4. when he gave him up to fall upon the edge of his own sword, and died. Thus he cut down Ananias with Sapphira his wife, when he struck them down dead in the midst of the congregation, Acts v. 10. I might here also discourse of Absalom, Ahitophel, and Judas, who were all three hanged: the first by God's revengeful hand, the other were given up of God to be their own executioners. These were barren and unprofitable fig-trees, such as God took no pleasure in, therefore he commanded to cut them down. The Psalmist saith, Psalm lvii. 9. *He shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living and in his wrath.*

Barren fig-tree, hearken; God calls for the ax, his sword, bring it hither, here is a barren professor, *Cut him down, why cumbereth he the ground,*

Why cumbereth it the ground.

By these words the Lord suggesteth reasons of his displeasure against the barren fig-tree; it cumbereth the ground. The holy Ghost doth not only take an argument from its barrenness, but because it is a cumber ground, therefore cut it down; wherefore it must needs be a provocation.

1. Because as much as in him lieth, he disappointeth the design of God in planting his vineyard: *I looked that it should bring forth fruit.*

2. It hath also abused his patience, his long-suffering, his three years patience.

3. It hath also abused his labour, his pains, his care, and providence of protection and preservation; for he hedges his vineyard, and walls it about. Cumber-ground, all these things thou abusest. He waters his vineyard, and looks to it night and day, but all these things thou hast abused.

Further; there are other reasons of God's displeasure: As,

1. A cumber-ground is a very mock and reproach to religion, a mock and reproach to the ways of God, to the people of God, to the word of God, and to the name of religion. It is expected of all hands, that all the trees in the garden of God should be fruitful; God expects fruit, the church expects fruit, the world, even the world conclude that professors should

should be fruitful in good works; I say, the very world expecteth that professors should be better than themselves: but barren fig-tree, thou disappointest all: nay, hast thou not learned the wicked ones thy ways? Hast thou not learned them to be more wicked by thy example? (but that's by the by) Barren fig-tree, thou hast disappointed others, and must be disappointed thyself. *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?*

2. The barren fig-tree takes up the room where a better tree might stand; I say, it takes up the room, it keeps so long as it stands where it doth, a fruitful tree out of that place, and therefore it must be cut down. Barren fig-tree, dost thou hear? Because the Jews stood fruitless in the vineyard; therefore, saith God, Mat. xxi. 33, 41. *The kingdom of heaven shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation that shall render him their fruits in their season.* The Jews for their barrenness were cut down, and more fruitful people put in their room. As Samuel also said to barren Saul, 1 Sam. xv. 28. *The Lord hath rent the kingdom from thee, and hath given it to thy neighbour that is better than thou.* The unprofitable servant must be cast out, must be cut down, Mat. xxv. 27.

Cumber ground, How many hopeful, inclinable, forward people, hast thou, by thy fruitless and unprofitable life, kept out of the vineyard of God? For thy sake have the people stumbled at religion; by thy life have they been

been kept from the love of their own salvation. Thou hast been also a means of hardening others, and of quenching and killing weak beginnings. Well barren fig-tree, look to thyself, (thou wilt not not go to heaven thyself, and them that would thou hindereſt) thou muſt not always cumber the ground, nor always hinder the ſalvation of others: Thou ſhalt be cut down, and another ſhall be planted in thy room.

3. The cumber-ground is a ſucker, he draws away the heart and nourishment from the other trees. Were the cumber-ground cut down, the other would be more fruitful; he draws away the fatneſs of the ground to himſelf, that would make the other more hearty and fruitful, *One ſinner deſtroyeth much good*, Eccleſ. ix. 18.

The cumber-ground is a very drone in the hive, that eats up the honey that ſhould feed the labouring bee; he is a thief in the candle, that waſteth the tallow, but giveth no light; he is the unfavoury ſalt, that is fit for nought but the dunghill. Look to it, barren fig-tree.

And he anſwering ſaid unto him, Lord, let it alone this year alſo, until I ſhall dig about it and dung it, and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou ſhalt cut it down, verſe 3, 9.

THeſe are the words of the dreſſer of the vineyard, who, I told you is Jeſus Chriſt (for

(for he made intercession for the transgressors) and they contain a petition, presented to an offended Justice, praying that a little more time and patience might be exercised towards the barren cumber-ground fig tree.

In this petition there are six things considerable:

First, That justice might be deferred; O that justice might be deferred. Lord, let it alone, &c. a while longer.

Secondly, Here is a time prefixed, as a space to try if more means will cure a barren fig-tree, Lord, let it alone this year also.

Thirdly, The means to help it are propounded, until I shall dig about it, and dung it.

Fourthly, Here is also an insinuation of a supposition, that by thus doing, God's expectation may be answered; And if it bear fruit, well.

Fifthly, Here is a supposition that the barren fig-tree may yet abide barren, when Christ hath done what he will unto it; And if it bear fruit, &c.

Sixthly, Here is at last a resolution, that if thou continue barren, hewing days will come upon thee. *And if it bear fruit well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut in down.*

But to proceed according to my former method, by way of exposition.

Lord, let it alone this year also.

Here is astonishing grace indeed, astonishing grace! I say, that the Lord Jesus should con-

cern himself with a barren fig-tree; that he should step in to stop the blow from a barren fig-tree. True, he stopt the blow but for a time; but why did he stop it at all? Why did he not fetch out the ax? Why did he not do execution? Why did not he cut it down? Barren fig-tree, 'tis well for thee that there is a Jesus at God's right hand, a Jesus of that largeness of bowels, as to have compassion for a barren fig-tree, else justice had never let thee alone to cumber the ground as thou hast done. When Israel also had sinned against God, down they had gone; but that Moses stood in the breach, Exod. xxxii. 10. *Let me alone* (saith God to him) *that I may consume them in a moment, and I will make of thee a great nation.* Barren fig-tree, dost thou hear? thou knew not how oft the hand of divine justice hath been up to strike, and how many years since thou hadst been cut down, had not Jesus caught hold of his Father's ax. Let me alone, let me fetch my blow, or cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? Wilt thou provoke still? Thou hast wearied men, and provoked the justice of God; And wilt thou weary my God also! Isa. vii. 13.

Lord, let it alone this year also.

Lord, a little longer, let's not lose a soul for want of means; I will try, I will see if I can make it fruitful, I will not beg a long life, not that it might still be barren, and so provoke

voke thee. I beg for the sake of the soul, the immortal soul, Lord, spare it one year only, one year longer, this year also; if I do any good to it, it will be in little time. Thou shalt not be over-wearied with waiting; this year, and then.

Barren fig-tree, dost thou hear what striving there is between the vine dresser and the husbandman for thy life? Cut it down, says one; Lord spare it, saith another: 'tis a cumber ground, saith the Father; one year longer prays the Son; Let it alone this year also.

Until I shall dig about it and dung it.

The Lord Jesus by these words supposeth two things; as causes of the want of fruit in a barren fig-tree, and two things he supposeth as a remedy.

The things that are the cause of want of fruit are.

1. 'Tis earth-bound; Lord, the fig-tree is earth-bound.

2. A want of warmer means, of fatter means.

Wherefore accordingly he propoundeth, *First*, To loosen the earth to dig about it.

Secondly, And then to supply it with dung; to dig about it, and dung it, Lord, let it alone this year also, until I shall dig about it. I doubt it is too much ground-bound; The love of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, Luke xiv. ly too close to the roots of the heart of this professor. The love of riches, the love of honours, the love of pleasures, are the thorns

that choak the word; 1 John ii. 15, 16. *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, are not of the Father, but enmity to God.* How then (where these things bind up the heart) can there be fruit brought forth to God: barren fig tree, see how the Lord Jesus by these very words, suggesteth the cause of thy fruitfulness of soul. The things of this world ly too close to thy heart; the earth with its things hath bound up thy roots; thou art an earth-bound soul, thou art wrapt up in thick clay. *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him:* How then can he be fruitful in the vineyard? This kept Judas from the fruit of caring for the poor, John xii. 6. This kept Demas from the fruit of self-denial, 2 Tim. iv. 10. And this kept Ananias and Sapphira his wife from the goodly fruit of sincerity and truth, Acts v. 5, 10. What shall I say, These are foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition; for the love of money is the root of all evil, 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. How then can good fruit grow from such a root, the root of all evil? Which while some covet after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. It is an evil root, nay, it is the root of all evil: how then can the professor that hath such a root, or a root wrapped up in such earthly things, as the lusts and pleasure and vanities of this world, bring forth fruit to God? Until

Until I shall (dig) about it.

Lord, I will loose his roots, I will dig up his earth, I will lay by his roots bare; my hand shall be upon him by sickness, by disappointments, by cross providences: I will dig about him until he stand shaking, and tottering, until he be ready to fall; then if ever he will seek to take faster hold. Thus, I say deals the Lord Jesus oft times with the barren professor: he diggeth about him, he finiteth one blow at his heart, another blow at his lusts, a third at his pleasures, a fourth at his comforts, another at his self conceitedness; thus he diggeth about him: this is the way to take bad earth from his roots, and to loosen his roots from the earth. Barren fig tree see here the care, the love, the labour, and way, which the Lord Jesus the dresser of the vineyard is fain to take with thee, if happily thou mayest be made fruitful.

Until I shall dig about it and (dung) it.

As the earth by binding the roots too closely, may hinder the tree's being fruitful; so the want of better means may be also a cause thereof. And this is more than intimated by the dresser of the vineyard. Until I shall dig about it, and dung it. I will supply it with a more fruitful ministry, with a warmer word. I will give them pastors after mine own heart, I will dung them. You know dung is a more warm, a more fat; more hearty, and succour-

ing matter, that is commonly the place in which trees are planted.

I will dig about it, and dung it, I will bring it under an heart awakening ministry; the means of grace shall be fat and good. I will also visit it with heart-awakening, heart warming, heart encouraging considerations; I will apply warm dung to its roots; I will strive with him by my Spirit, and give him some tastes of the heavenly gift, and the power of the world to come, I am loth to lose him for want of digging; Lord, let it alone this year also, until I shall dig about it, and dung it.

And if it bear fruit, well.

And if the fruit of all my labour makes this fig-tree fruitful, I shall count my time, my labour and means well bestowed upon it, and thou also, O my God, shalt be therewith much delighted. For thou art gracious and merciful, and repentest thee of the evil which thou threatnest to bring upon a people.

These words therefore inform us, that if a barren fig-tree, a barren professor, shall now at last bring forth to God, it shall go well with that professor, it shall go well with that poor soul. His former barrenness, his former tempting of God, his abuse of God's patience and long suffering: his mispending year after year, shall now all be forgiven him. Yea, God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, will now pass, and forget all, and say, well done, at last.

last. When I say to the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if he then do that which is lawful and right, if he walks in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity, he shall surely live, he shall not die, Ezek. xviii.

21. Barren fig-tree, dost thou hear? The ax is laid to thy roots, the Lord Jesus prays God to spare thee; hath he been digging about thee? hath he been dunging of thee, O barren fig-tree? Now thou art come to the point: if thou shalt now become good, if thou shalt, after a gracious manner, suck in the gospel dung, and if thou shalt bring forth fruit unto God, well; but if not, the fire is the last: Fruit, or the fire; fruit, or the fire, barren fig-tree. If it bear fruit, well.

And if not, then, after that, thou shalt cut it down.

And if not, &c The Lord by this *if*, giveth us to understand, that there is a generation of professors in the world, that are incurable, that will not, that cannot repent, nor be profited by the means of grace: a generation, I say, that will retain a profession, but will not bring forth fruit: a generation that will wear out the patience of God, time and tide, threatenings and intercessions, judgments and mercies: And after all will be unfruitful.

O the desperate wickedness that is in thy heart! O barren professor, dost thou hear? the Lord Jesus stands yet in doubt about thee! there

there is an (*if*) stands yet in the way; I say, the Lord Jesus stands yet in doubt about thee, whether at last thou wilt be good; whether he may not labour in vain; whether his digging and dunging will come to more than lost labour, I gave her space to repent, and she repented not, Rev. ii. 21. I digged about it, I dunged it; I gained time, and supplied it with means; but I laboured herein in vain, and spent my strength for nought, and in vain. Dost thou hear barren fig-tree? There is yet a question, Whether it will be well with thy soul at last?

There is nothing more exasperating to the mind of a man, than to find all his kindness and favour slighted: neither is the Lord Jesus so provoked with any thing, as when sinners abuse his means of grace: if it be barren and fruitless under my gospel; if it turn my grace into wantonness; if after digging and dunging, and waiting, it yet remains unfruitful, I will let thee cut it down.

Gospel means applied is the last remedy for a barren professor; if the gospel, if the grace of the gospel will not do, there can be nothing expected, but cut it down. *Then after that thou shall cut it down.*

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not? therefore

fore your house is left unto you desolate, Mat. xxiii. 37, 38. Yet it cannot be, but that this Lord Jesus, who at first did put a stop to the execution of his Father's justice, because he desired to try more means with the fig-tree: I say, it cannot be, but that an heart so full of compassion, as his is, should be touched, to behold this professor must now be cut down, Luke xix. 41, 42. And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes.

After that thou shalt cut it down.

When Christ giveth thee over, there is no Intercessor, no Mediator, no more sacrifice for sin; all is gone but judgment, but the ax, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries, Heb. x. 26, 27, 28.

Barren fig-tree, take heed that thou comest not to these last words, for these words are a give up, a cast up, a cast up of a cast away; After that thou shalt cut it down. They are as much as if Christ had said, Father, I begg'd for more time for this barren professor: I begg'd until I should dig about it, and dung it; but now Father, the time is out, the year is ended, the summer is ended, and no good done. I have also tried with my means, with the gospel. I have digg'd about it, I have laid
also

also the fat and hearty dung of the gospel to it: but all comes to nothing. Father, I deliver up this professor to thee again, I have done all, I have done praying, and endeavouring; I will hold the head of thine ax no longer: take him into the hands of justice, do justice to the law, I will never beg for him more. After that thou shalt cut it down, Wo unto them when I depart from them. Hof. ix. 12. Now is this professor left naked indeed, naked to God, naked to satan, to sin, to the law, to death, to hell, naked to judgment, and to the grips of a guilty conscience, and to the torment of the worm that never dies, and to that fire that shall never be quenched, Heb. xii. 29. *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.* From this brief pass thro' this parable, you have these two general considerations.

First, that even when the justice of God cries out, I cannot endure to wait on this barren professor any longer; then Jesus Christ interceeds for a little more patience, and a little more striving with this professor, if possible he may make him a fruitful professor: *Lord let it alone this year also, until I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well, &c.*

Secondly, There are some professors whose day of grace will end with, cut it down, with judgment;

judgment; when Christ by his means hath been used for their salvation.

The first of these observations I shall pass, and not meddle at all therewith; but shall briefly speak to the second, to wit,

That there are some professors whose day of grace will end with, cut it down, with judgment, when Christ by his means hath been used for their salvation.

This the apostle sheweth in that 3d chap. of his epistle to the Hebrews, where he tells us that the people of the Jews after a forty years patience, and endeavour to do them good by the means appointed for that purpose, their end was to be cut down, or excluded the land of promise for their final incredulity; so we see they could not enter in, because of unbelief. Wherefore saith he, *I was grieved with that generation, and said, they do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: So I swear in my wrath, that they shall not enter into my rest.* As who should say, I would they should have entered in, and for that purpose I brought them out of Egypt, led them through the sea, and taught them in the wilderness; but they did not answer my work nor designs in that matter; wherefore, they shall not, I swear they shall not: I swear in my wrath they shall not enter into my rest. Here is cutting down with judgment. So again, chap. 4. he saith, *As I have sworn in my wrath,*

wrath, If they shall enter into my rest altho' the works were finished from the foundation of the world, Heb. iv. 2, 3, 4. This word (*If*) is the same with (*they shall not*) in the chap. before. And where he saith, *Altho' the works were finished from the foundation of the world;* he giveth us to understand, that what preparations soever are made for the salvation of sinners, and of how long continuance soever they are, yet the God-tempting, God-provoking, and fruitless professor is like to go without a share therein! *Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.* Jude 5, 6. I will therefore put you in remembrance, tho' ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not. And the angels that kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. Here is an instance to purpose, an instance of men and angels; men saved out of the land of Egypt, and in their journey towards Canaan, the type of heaven, cut down: angels created, and placed in the heavens in great state and principality; yet both these, because unfruitful to God in their places, were cut down; the men destroyed by God, (for so saith the text) and the angels reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, to the judgment of the great day.

Now,

Now, in my handling of this point, I shall discourse of the cutting down, or the judgment here denounced, as it respecteth the doing of it by God's hand immediately, and that too, with respect to his casting them out of the world; and not as it respecteth an act of the church, &c. And as to this cutting down or judgment, it must be concluded, that it cannot be before the day of grace be past with the fig tree, but according to the observation, there be some professors whose day of grace will end with, cut it down, and according to the words of the text, then (after that) thou shalt cut it down: after that, that is, after all my attempts and endeavours to make it fruitful, after I have left it, given it over, done with it, and have resolved to bestow no more days of grace, opportunities of grace, and means of grace upon it; Then, after that, thou shalt cut it down.

Besides, the giving up of the fig-tree, is before the execution. Execution is not always presently on the sentence given, for after that convenient time is thought on, and then is cutting down; and so it is here in the text. The decree, that it shall perish, is gathered from its continuing fruitless all the last year, and at the end of all endeavours: but cutting down is not yet, for that comes with an afterword; then after that thou shalt cut it down.

So then, that I may orderly proceed with the observation, I must lay down these two propositions,

Proposi.

Proposi. 1. That the day of grace ends with some men before God takes them out of this world. And,

Proposi. 2 The death or cutting down of such men, will be dreadful. For this, cut down, when it is understood in the larger sense, (as here indeed it ought) it sheweth, not only the wrath of God against a man's life in this world, but wrath against him body and soul and is as much as to say, Cut him off from all the privileges and benefits that come by grace, both in this world, and that which is to come.

But to proceed, The day of grace ends with some men before God taketh them out of this world.

I shall give you some instances of this, and go on to the last proposition.

First, I shall instance in Cain, Cain was a professor, (Gen. iv. 3.) a sacrificer, a worshipper of God, yea, the first worshipper that we read of after the fall; but his grapes were wild ones, Gen. iv. 5, 8. his works were evil, he did not do what he did, from true gospel motives; therefore God disallowed his works. At this his countenance falls; wherefore he envies his brother, disputes with him, takes his opportunity and kills him. Now in the day he did this act, were the heavens closed up against him, and that himself did smartingly and fearfully feel, when God made inquisition for the blood of Abel. *And now cursed* (saith God)

od) shalt thou be from the earth which hath
ened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood
om thy hands, Gen. iv. 8, 11, to 15. and Cain
id, my punishment is greater than I can bear:
ine iniquity is greater than it may be for-
even. Behold thou hast driven me out this
ay from the face of the earth, and from thy
ce shall I be hid. Now thou art cursed, saith
od. Thou hast driven me out this day, saith
ain, and from thy face shall I be hid: I shall
ever more have hope in thee, smile from
ee, nor expect mercy at thy hand. Thus
herefore Cain's day of grace ended, and the
eavens, with God's own heart, were shut up
gainst him: yet, after this, he lived long,
Gen. iv. 10. Cutting down was not come yet:
fter this he lived to marry a wife, ver. 17. to
eget a cursed brood, to build a city, (and
hat not?) all which could not be quickly done:
herefore Cain might live after the day of grace
as past with him, several hundred years.

Secondly, I shall instance in Ishmael, Gen.
vii. 25, 26. Ishmael was a professor, was
rought up in Abraham's family; and was
rcumcised at thirteen years of age, Gen. xvi.
2. But he was the son of the bond-woman,
e brought not forth good fruit, he was a
ild professor: for all his religion, he would
off at those that were better than himself.
Well upon a day his brother Isaac was wean-
d, at which time his father made a feast, and
rejoiced

rejoiced before the Lord, for that he had given him the promised son; at this Ishmael mocked them, their son, and godly rejoicing. Then came the Spirit of God upon Sarah, and she cried, *Cast him out, cast out this bond woman and her son; for the son of this bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, with Isaac*, Gen. xxi. 9. 10, 11. Now Paul to the Galatians, chap. iv. 29, 30, 31. makes this casting out to be, not only a casting out of Abraham's family, but a casting out also from a lot with the saints in heaven. Also Moses giveth us a notable proof thereof, in saying, that when he died, he was gathered to his people, Gen. xxv. 17. his people by the mother's side, for he was reckoned from her, the son of Hagar, the son of the bond-woman. Now she was descended from the Egyptians, Gen. xxi. 9. So that he was gathered when he died, notwithstanding his profession to the place that Pharaoh and his host were gathered to, who were drowned in the red-sea; these were his people, and he was of them, both by nature and disposition, by persecuting as they did. But now, When did the day of grace end with this man? Observe, and I will shew you, Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised, and then was Abraham ninety years old and nine, Gen. xvii. 24, 25, 26. The next year Isaac was born, so that Ishmael was now fourteen years of age: now when

when Isaac was weaned, (suppose he suck'd four years) by that account, the day of grace must be ended with Ishmael, by that time he was eighteen years old, Gen. xxv. 12. &c. For that day he mocked, that day it was said, cast him out: and of that casting out the apostle makes what I have said. Beware ye young barren professors. Now Ishmael lived an hundred and nineteen years after this in great tranquillity and honour with men; after this he also begat twelve princes, even after this day of grace was past.

Thirdly, I shall instance in Esau, Gen. xxv. 27, &c. Esau also was a professor, he was born unto Isaac, and circumcised according to the custom: but Esau was a gamesom professor, an huntsman, a man of the field; also he was wedded to his lusts, which he did also venture to keep, rather than the birth-right. Well, upon a day when he came from hunting, and was faint, he sold his birth-right to Jacob his brother: now the birth-right in those days, had the promise and blessing annexed to it. Yea, they were so entailed in this, that the one could not go without the other; wherefore the apostle's caution is here of weight, Heb. xii. 16, 17. *Take heed (saith he) lest there be among you a fornicator, or profane person as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birth-right: For ye know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected;*

rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. Now the ending of Esau's day of grace is to be reckoned from his selling of his birth-right; for there the apostle points it, lest there be among you any that like Esau, sells his birth-right; for then goes hence the blessing also.

But Esau sold his birth-right long before his death. Twenty years after this, Jacob was with Laban, Gen. xxxi. 41. and xxxii. 6. and when he returned home, his brother Esau met him. Further, after this when Jacob dwelt again sometime with his father, then Jacob and Esau buried him. I suppose, Gen. xxxv. 28, 29. he might live above forty, yea, for ought I know, above fourscore years after he had sold his birth-right, and so consequently had put himself out of the grace of God.

Three things I would further note upon these three professors.

First, Cain an angry professor, Ishmael a mocking one, Esau a lustful, gamesome one: three symptoms of a barren professor. For he that can be angry, and that can mock, and that can indulge his lusts: cannot bring forth fruit to God.

Secondly, The day of grace ended with these professors at that time when they committed some grievous sin: as Cain, when he killed his brother; Ishmael, when he mocked at Isaac, &c. And Esau, when out of love to his lusts,

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he despised, and sold his birth-right. Beware barren professor, thou mayest do that in half a quarter of an hour, from the evil of which thou mayest not be delivered for ever and ever.

Thirdly, Yet these three after their day of grace was over, lived better lives as to outward things that ever they did before. Cain after this, was lord of a city, Gen. iv. 17. Ishmael was, after this, father of twelve princes, Gen. xv. 16. and Esau, after this, told his brother, I have enough my brother, keep that thou hast to thyself, chap. xxxiii. 8. 9. Ease and peace, and a prosperous life in outwards, are no signs of the favour of God, to a barren and fruitless professor; but rather of his wrath that thereby he may be capable to treasure up more wrath, against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

Let this much serve for the proof of the first proposition, namely, That the day of grace ends with some men, before God takes them out of this world.

Now then to shew you, by some signs how you may know that the day of grace is ended, or near to ending with the barren professor; *And after that thou shalt cut it down.*

1. He that hath stood it against God and withstood all those means for fruit, that God used for the making of him (if it might have been) a fruitful tree in his garden, is in this danger; and this indeed is the sum of the
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parable.

parable. The fig-tree here mentioned, was blessed with the application of means, had time allowed it to receive the nourishment: but it outstood, withstood, overstood All, all that the husbandman or the vine-dresser did.

Signs of being past grace.

But a little distinctly to particularize in four or five particulars.

1. *Sign.* The day of grace is like to be past, when a professor hath withstood, abused and worn out God's patience; then he is in danger, this is a provocation; then God cries, Cut it down. There are some men that steal into a profession, no body knows how; even as this fig-tree was brought into the vineyard, by other hands than God's; and there they abide lifeless, graceless, careless, and without any good conscience to God at all. Perhaps they came in for the loaves, for a trade, for credit, for a blind; or it may be, to stifle and choak the checks and grinding pangs of an awakened and disquieted conscience. Now having obtained their purpose, like the sinners of Sion, they are at ease and secure; saying, like Agag, 1 Sam. xv. 32. Surely the bitterness of death is past, I am well, I shall be saved; and go to heaven: thus in these vain conceits it spends a year, two or three; not remembering that at every season of grace, and at every opportunity of the gospel, the Lord comes seeking fruit. Well, sinner, well, barren fig-tree,

fig-tree this is but a coarse beginning: God comes for fruit. What have I here, saith God? What a fig-tree is this, that hath stood this year in my vineyard, and brought me forth no fruit? I will cry unto him, professor, barren fig-tree, be fruitful: I look for fruit, I expect fruit, I must have fruit, therefore be-think thyself. At these the professor pauses; but these are words, not blows, therefore off goes this consideration from the heart. When God comes the next year, he finds him still as he was, a barren and fruitless cumber-ground. And now again he complains, here are two years gone, and no fruit appears: Well, I will defer mine anger for my name's sake; Isa. xlviii. 9. I will defer mine anger for my praise, I will refrain from thee, that I cut thee not off (as yet.) I will wait, I will yet wait to be gracious. But this helps not, this hath not the least influence upon the barren fig-tree; tush, saith he, here is no threatning: God is merciful, he will defer his anger, Isa. xxx. 18. He waits to be gracious: I am not yet afraid. O how do ungodly men that creep unawares into the vineyard, turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness! Well, he comes the third year for fruit, as he did before, but still he finds but a barren fig tree: No fruit, Now he cries out again, O thou dresser of my vineyard, come hither, here is a fig-tree hath stood these three years in my vineyard, and hath at every season disappoint-

ed my expectation, for I have looked for fruit in vain: Cut it down, my patience is worn out, I shall wait on this fig-tree no longer.

2. And now he begins to shake the fig tree with his threatnings; fetch out the ax. Now the ax is death, death therefore is called for; death, come smite me this fig-tree. And withal the Lord shakes this sinner, and whirls him upon a sick-bed, saying, Take him death, he hath abused my patience and forbearance, not remembering that it should have led him to repentance, and to the fruits thereof. Death, fetch away this fig-tree to the fire, fetch this barren professor to hell. At this death comes with grim looks into the chamber; yea, and hell follows with him to the bed side, and both stare this professor in the face, yea, begin to lay hands upon him, one smiting him with pains in his body, with head-ack, heart-ack, back-ack, shortness of breath, fainting, qualms, trembling of joints, stopping at the chest, and almost all the symptoms of a man past all recovery. Now while death is thus tormenting the body, hell is doing with the mind and conscience, striking them with its pains, casting sparks of fire in thither, wounding with sorrows and fears of everlasting damnation, the spirit of this poor creature: and now he begins to bethink himself, and to cry to God for mercy; Lord, spare me, Lord, spare me. Nay, saith God, you have been

been a provocation to me these three years. How many times have you disappointed me? How many seasons have you spent in vain? How many sermons and other mercies did I of my patience afford you, but to no purpose at all? Take him death. O good Lord, saith the sinner, spare me but this once; raise me but this once. Indeed I have been a barren professor; and have stood to no purpose at all in thy vineyard: But spare! O spare this one time, I beseech thee, and I will be better. Away, away, you will not; I have tried you these three years already, you are naught, if I should recover you again, you would be as bad as you was before (and all this talk is while death stands by.) The sinner cries again, Good Lord, try me this once, let me get up again this once, and see if I do not mend. But will you promise me to mend? Yes, indeed, Lord, and vow it too, I will never be so bad again, I will be better. Well, saith God, death, let this professor alone for this time: I will try him a while longer, he hath promised, he hath vowed, that he will amend his ways; it may be he will mind to keep his promises. Vows are solemn things, it may be he may fear to break his vows. Arise from off thy bed. And now God lays down his ax. At this the poor creature is very thankful, praises God, and fawns upon him; shews as if he did it heartily, and calls to others to thank him too,

he therefore riseth as one would think, to be a new creature indeed. But by that time he hath put on his cloaths, is come down from his bed, and ventured into the yard or shop, and there sees how all things are gone to sixes and sevens, he begins to have second thoughts, and says to his folks, What have you all been doing? How are all things out of order? I am I cannot tell what behind hand, one may see if a man be but a little to a side, that you have neither wisdom nor prudence to order things. And now, instead of seeking to spend the rest of his time to God, he doubleth his diligence after this world; alas! all must not be lost, we must have provident care. And thus quite forgetting the sorrows of death, the pains of hell, the promises and vows which he made to God to be better: Because judgment was not (*now*) speedily executed, therefore the heart of this poor creature is fully set in him to do evil.

3. These things proving ineffectual, God takes hold of his ax again, sends death to a wife, to a child, to his cattle, *Your young men have I slain, and taken away your horses,* Amos iv 9, 10. I will blast him, cross him, disappoint him, and cast him down; and will set myself against him, in all that he putteth his hand unto. At this the poor barren professor cries out again, Lord, I have sinned, spare me once more, I beseech thee. O take not away the desire of mine eyes; spare my children, bless me

me in my labours, and I will mend and be better! No faith God, you lied to me last time, I will trust you in this no longer; and withal, tumbles the wife, the child, the estate, into a grave. And then returns to his place, till this professor more unfeignedly acknowledgeth his offence, *Hos. v. 14, 15.*

At this the poor creature is afflicted and distressed, rends his clothes, and begins to call the breaking of his promises and vows to mind; he mourns and prays, and like Ahab, a while walks softly, at the remembrance of the justness of the hand of God upon him. And now he renews his promises, Lord, try me this one time more, take off thy hand and see; they go far that never turn. Well, God spareth him again, sets down the ax again: Many times he did deliver them, but they provoked him with their counsels, and were brought low for their iniquities, *Psalms cvi. 43.* Now they seem to be thankful again, and are as if they were resolved to be godly indeed. Now they read, they pray, they go to meetings, and seem to be serious a pretty while, but at last they forget: their lusts prick them; suitable temptations present themselves; wherefore they return to their own crooked ways again *Psalms lxxviii. 34, 36.* *When he slew them, then they sought him, and returned early after God; nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongue.*

4. Yet again, the Lord will not leave this professor, but takes up his ax again, and puts him under a more heart searching ministry, a ministry that shall search him, and turn him over and over: a ministry that shall meet with him, as Elijah met with Ahab, in all his acts of wickedness, and now the ax is laid to the root of the tree. Besides, this ministry doth not only search the heart, but presents the sinner with the golden rays of the glorious gospel; now is Christ Jesus set forth evidently, now is grace displayed sweetly: Now are the promises broken like boxes of ointment to the perfuming of the whole room. But alas there is no fruit yet on this fig-tree. While his heart is searching he wrangles; while the glorious grace of the gospel is unvailing, this professor wags and is wanton, gathers up some scrapes thereof, tastes the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, Heb. vi. 5. drinks in the rain that comes oft upon him, v. 7. But bringeth not forth fruit meet for him whose gospel it is, v. 8. takes no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart, 2 Kings x. 31. but counts that the glory of the gospel consists in talk and shew, and that our obedience thereto is a matter of speculation; that good works lye in good words: And if they can finely talk they think they bravely please God. They think the kingdom of God consists only in word, not in power; and thus proves ineffectual this fourth means also.

5. Well,

5. Well, now the ax begins to be heaved higher, for indeed God is ready to smite the sinner; yet before he will strike the stroke, he will try one way more at the last, and if that misseth, down goes the fig-tree. Now this last way, is to tug and strive with this professor by his Spirit. Wherefore the Spirit of the Lord is now come to him, but not always to strive with men, Gen. vi. 8. Yet for some while he will strive with him, he will awaken, he will convince, he will call to remembrance former sins, former judgments, the breach of former vows and promises, the mispending of former days: He will also present persuasive arguments, encouraging promises, dreadful judgments, shortness of time to repent in, and that there is hope if he come. Further, he will shew him the certainty of death, and judgment to come, yea, he will pull and strive with this sinner. But, behold, the mischief now lies here, here is tugging and striving on both sides. The Spirit convinces, man turns a deaf ear to God: The Spirit saith, Receive my instruction, and live: But the man pulls away his shoulder. The Spirit shews him whither he is going, but the man closeth his eyes against it: the Spirit offereth violence, the man strives and resists: They have done despite unto the Spirit of grace, Heb. x. 29. The Spirit parlieth a second time, and urgeth reasons of a new nature; but the

sinner answers, *No, I have loved strangers, and after them will I go*. At this God's fury comes up into his face, now he comes out of his holy place, and is terrible: Now he sweareth in his wrath, they shall never enter into his rest: I exercised towards you my patience, and smote you in your person, relations and estate, yet you have not turned unto me, saith the Lord. *In thy filthiness is lewdness; because I have purged thee and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I cause my fury to rest upon thee* Ezek. xxiv. 13. *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?*

The second sign, that such a professor is almost (if not quite) past grace, is, when God hath given it over, or lets him alone, and suffers him to do any thing, and that without control, he helpeth him not either in works of holiness, or in straits and difficulty. Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone, Hos. iv. 17. *Wo be to them when I depart from them; I will laugh at their calamities and will mock when their fear cometh,* Prov xxiv. — 28.

Barren fig tree, Thou hast heretofore been digged about and dunged, God's mattock hath heretofore been at thy roots, gospel dung hath heretofore been applied to thee, thou hast heretofore been strove with, convinced, awakened, made to taste and see, and cry, O the blessedness! Thou hast heretofore been met with under the word; thy heart hath melted,

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thy spirit hath fallen, thy soul hath trembled, and thou hast felt something of the power of the gospel. But thou hast sinned, thou hast provoked the eyes of his glory, thy iniquity is found to be hateful; and now perhaps God hath left thee, given thee up, and lets thee alone. Heretofore thou wast tender, thy conscience startled at the temptation to wickedness, for thou wert taken off from the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21, 22. But that every vomit that once thou wert turned from, now thou lapest up (with the dog in the proverb) again, and that very mire, that once thou seemest to be washed from, thou now art tumbling in afresh. But to particularize, there are three signs of a man's being given up of God.

1. When he is alone in sinning, when the reins of his lusts are loosed, and he given up to them. *And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness,* Rom. i. 28, 29. Seest thou a man that heretofore had the knowledge of God, and some awe of Majesty upon him? I say, seest thou such an one, sporting himself, in his own deceivings, Rom. i. 30, 31. Turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and walking after his own ungodly lusts? His judgment

now of a long time lingereth not, and his damnation slumbereth not, 2 Pet. ii. 13. Dost thou hear barren professor? It is astonishing to see, how these that once seemed sons of the morning, and were making preparations for eternal life, now at last (for the rottenness of their hearts, by the judgment of God) permitted, being past feeling to give themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness, Eph. iv. 18, 19. A great number of such were in the first gospel-days: against whom Peter, and Jude, and John pronounced the heavy judgment of God. Peter and Jude couple them with the fallen angels, 2 Pet. iv. 3, to 8. And prayer is forbid to be made for them, because that is happened to them that happened to the angels that fell. Jude ver. 6. *Who forsaking their first state, and leaving their own habitation, are reserved in chains under everlasting darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.*

1. These are beyond all mercy. 2. They are beyond all promises. 3. Beyond all hopes of repentance. 4. They have no intercessor, nor any more share in a sacrifice for sin. 5. There remains nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment. Wherefore, 6. They are the true fugitives and vagabonds, that being left of God, of Christ, of grace, and of the promise, and being beyond all hope, wander and stagger to and fro, even as the devil their
associate

associate, until their time shall come to die, or until they descend into battle and perish.

2. Wherefore they let alone in hearing. If these at any time come under the word, there is for them no God, no favour of the means of grace, nor stirring of heart, no pity for themselves, no love for their own salvation. Let them look on this hand or that, there they see such effects of the word in others as produce signs of repentance and love to God and his Christ. These men only have their backs bowed down alway, Rom. xi. 10. These men only have the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear to this very day. Wherefore as they go to the place of the holy; so they come from the place of the holy, and soon are forgotten in the places where they so did, Eccl. viii. 10. Only they reap this damage, 'They treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,' Rom. ii. 3, 4, 5. Look to it, barren professor.

3. If he be visited after the common way of mankind, either with sickness, distress, or any kind of calamity, still no God appears, no sanctifying hand of God, no special mercy is mixed with the affliction. But he falls sick, and grows well, like the beast: or is under distress as Saul, who when he was engaged by the Philistians, was forsaken and left of God, 1 Sam. xxviii. 4, 5, 6. 'And the Philistians gathered

‘thered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem; and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they came and pitched at Gilboa; and when Saul saw the host of the Philistians, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him no more, neither by dream, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.’ The Lord answered him no more, he had done with him, cast him off, and rejected him, and left him to stand and fall with his sins by himself. But of this more in the conclusion, therefore I here forbear.

4. These men may go whither they will, do what they will; they may range from opinion to opinion, from nation to nation, from sect to sect, but are stedfast no where, they are left to their own uncertainties; they have not grace to establish their hearts, and tho’ some of them have boasted themselves of this liberty, yet Jude calls them *wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever*, ver. 13. They are left, as I said, to be fugitives and vagabonds in the earth, to wander every where, but to abide no-where, until they shall descend to their own place, Acts i. 5. with Cain and Judas, men of the same fate with themselves.

A third sign that such a professor is quite past grace, is, when his heart is grown so hard, so stony and impenetrable, that nothing will pierce it. Barren fig tree, dost thou consider?

sider? A hard and impenitent heart is the curse of God. A heart that cannot repent, is instead of all plagues at once: and hence it is that God saith of Pharaoh, *Exod. ix. 14. when he spake of delivering him up in the greatness of his anger, I will at this time send all my plagues upon thy heart.*

To some men that have grievously sinned under a profession of the gospel, God giveth this token of his displeasure, they are denied the power of repentance, their heart is bound they cannot repent, it is impossible they should repent, should they live a thousand years; *It is impossible for these fall-aways to be renewed again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame, Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6.* Now to have the heart so hardened, so judicially hardened, is as a bar put in by God against the salvation of this sinner. This was the burden of Spira's complaint, *I cannot do it now, O I cannot do it.*

This man sees what he hath done, what should help him, and what will become of him, yet he cannot repent: he pulled away his shoulder before, he stopped his ears before, he shut up his eyes before, and in that very posture God left him, and so he stands to this very day. I have fancied that Lot's wife, when turned into a pillar of salt, *Gen. xix. 26.* stood yet looking over her shoulder, or else with her face towards Sodom; as the judgment caught her

her, so it bound her, and left her a monument of God's anger to after generations.

We read of some that are seared with an hot iron, and that are past feeling: for seared persons in seared parts are. Their conscience is seared, 1 Tim. iv. 2. The conscience is the thing that must be touched with feeling, fear and remorse, if ever any good be done with the sinner. How then can any good be done to those whose conscience is worse than that, that is fast asleep in sin? Eph. iv. 19. For that conscience that is fast asleep may yet be effectually awakened and saved; but that conscience that is seared, dried, as it were, into a cinder, can never have any sense, feeling, or the least regret in this world. Barren fig-tree, hearken, judicial hardening is dreadful. There is a difference betwixt that hardness of heart that is incident to all men, and that which comes upon some as a signal or special judgment of God; and although all kind of hardness of heart in some sense may be called a judgment, yet to be hardened with this second kind is a judgment peculiar only to them that perish; an hardness that is sent as a punishment, for the abuse of light received, for a reward of apostacy.

This judicial hardness is discovered from that which is incident to all men, in these particulars:

1. It is an hardness coming after some great light received: because of some great sin committed against the light, and the grace that

gave

gave it. Such hardness as Pharaoh had, after the Lord had wrought wonderfully before him; such hardness as the Gentiles had, an hardness that darkened the heart; an hardness which made their minds reprobate. This hardness is also the same with that the Hebrews are cautioned to beware of, Heb. iii. 7. &c. an hardness that is caused by unbelief, and departing from the living God; an hardness compleated through the deceitfulness of sin; such as that in the provocation, of whom God sware, that they should not enter into his rest. 'Twas this kind of hardness also that both Cain, Ishmael and Esau, were hardened with after they had committed their great transgressions.

2. It is the greatest kind of hardness, and thence it is said to be harder than a rock, Jer. v. 2. or than an adamant, Zech. vii. 13. that is, harder than a flint: so hard that nothing can enter.

3. It is an hardness given in much anger, and that to bind the soul up in an impossibility of repentance.

4. It is an hardness therefore that is incurable, of which a man must die and be damned. Barren professor, hearken to this.

A fourth sign that such a professor is quite past grace, is, when he fortifies his hard heart against the terror of God's word, Job. ix. 4. &c. This is called hardning themselves against God, and turning of the Spirit against him. As thus, when after a profession of faith in
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the Lord Jesus, and of the doctrine that is according to godliness, they shall embolden themselves in courses of sin, by promising themselves that they shall have life and salvation notwithstanding. Barren professor, hearken to this. This man is called, Deut. xxix. 18. A root that beareth gall and wormwood, or a poisonous herb; such an one is abominated of God, yea, the abhorred of his soul: For this man saith, ver. 19. I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination or stubbornness of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: An opinion set against the whole word of God, yea against the very nature of God himself. Wherefore he adds, Deut. xix. 20. *Then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy, shall smoke against that man; and all the curses that are written in God's book shall lie upon him, and God shall blot out his name from under heaven.*

Yea, that man shall not fail to be effectually destroyed; verse 21. 'The Lord shall separate that man unto evil, out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant.

He shall separate him unto evil; he shall give him up, he shall leave him to his heart, he shall separate him to that, or those that will assuredly be too hard for him.

Now this judgment is effected when God has given a man up unto Satan, and given Satan leave, without fail, to complete his destruction

struction. I say, when God has given Satan leave effectually to compleat his destruction: for all that are delivered up unto Satan, have not, nor do not come to this end. But that is the man, whom God shall separate to evil, and shall leave in the hands of Satan, to compleat, without fail, his destruction.

Thus he served Ahab, a man that sold himself to work wickedness in God's sight, 1 Kings xxi. 25. *And the Lord said, who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner; And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him, 1 Kings xxii. 20, 21, 22. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth and do so. Thou shalt persuade him and prevail; do thy will, I leave him in thy hand; Go forth and do so.*

Wherefore in these judgments, the Lord much concerns himself for the management thereof, because of their provocation of him. This is the man, Whose ruin contriveth, and bringeth to pass by his own contrivance. *I will chuse their delusions for them; I will bring their fears upon them, Isa. lxvi. 4. I will chuse their devices, or the wickedness that their hearts contrive. I even I, will cause them to be accepted of and delightful to them. But who are they*

they that must thus be feared? Why, those among professors that have chosen their own ways, whose soul delights in their own abominations.

‘ Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned, who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.’ God shall send them. It is a great word: yea, God shall send them strong delusions; delusions that shall do, that shall make them believe a lie. Why so? That they all might be damned, every one of them, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness, 2 Thess. v. 10, 11, 12.

There is nothing more provoking to the Lord, than for a man to promise, when God threatneth; for a man to be light of conceit that he shall be safe, and yet be more wicked than in former days: this man’s soul abhors the truth of God: no marvel therefore if God’s soul abhors him; he has invented a way contrary to God, to bring about his own salvation; no marvel, therefore, if God invent a way to bring about his damnation. And seeing that these rebels are at this point, We shall have peace; God will see whose word shall stand: his or theirs.

A fifth sign of a man’s being past grace, is When he shall at this scoff, and inwardly grin,
and

and fret against the Lord, secretly purpose to continue his course, and put all to the venture, despising the messengers of the Lord. 'He that despised Moses law died without mercy; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?' &c. Heb. 10. 28.

Wherefore against these despisers God has set himself, and foretold, That they shall not believe but perish. 'Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, which ye shall in no ways believe, though a man declare it unto you, Acts xii. 41.

After that thou shalt cut it down.

Thus far we have treated of the barren fig-tree, or fruitless professor, with some signs to know him by; whereunto are added also some signs of those who neither will or can by any means, be fruitful, but must miserably perish. Now being come to the time of execution, I shall speak a word to that also, *After this thou shalt cut it down*: Christ at last turns the barren fig-tree over to the justice of God, shakes his hands of him, and gives him up to the fire for his unprofitableness.

Thou shalt cut it down.

Two things are to be considered.

1. The Executioner, *Thou*, the great, the dreadful, the eternal God. These words therefore, as I have already said, signify that Christ the Mediator, through whom alone salvation comes

comes, and by whom alone execution hath been deferred, now giving up the soul forbears to speak one syllable more for him, or to do the least act of grace further, to try for his recovery; but delivers him up to that fearful dispensation, to fall into the hands of the living God, Heb. x. 33.

2 The second to be considered, is, The instrument by which this execution is done, and that is death, compared here to an ax; and forasmuch as the tree is not felled at one blow, therefore the strokes are here continued, till all the blows be struck that are requisite for its felling: for now cutting time, and cutting work is come, cutting must be his portion, till he be cut down. *After that thou shalt cut it down.* Death, I say, is the ax that God often uses, therewith to take the barren fig-tree out of the vineyard, out of a profession, and also out of the world at once. But this ax is now new-grind, it cometh well edged to the roots of this barren fig tree. It hath been whetted by sin, by the law, and by a formal profession, and therefore must, and will make deep gashes, not only in the natural life, but in the heart and conscience also of this professor: The wages of sin is death, the sting of death is sin, 1 Cor. xv. Wherefore death comes not to this man as he doth to saints, muzzled or without his sting, but with open mouth, in all his strength: yea, he sends his first born, which

guilt, to devour his strength, and to bring him to the king of terrors, Job xviii. 13, 14.

But to give you, in a few particulars, the manner of this man's dying.

1. Now he hath his fruitless fruits beleaguer him round his bed, together with all the bands and legions of his other wickedness. His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden in the cords of his sins, Prov. v. 22.

2. Now some terrible discovery of God is made unto him, to the perplexing and terrifying of his guilty conscience. God shall cast upon him, and not spare; and he shall be afraid of that which is high, Job xxvii. 22.

3. The dark entry he is to go through, will be a sore amazement unto him; *For fear shall be in the way*, Eccles. xii. 5. yea, terrors will take hold on him, when he shall see the yawning jaws of death to gape upon him, and the door of the shadow of death open to give him passage out of the world. Now, who will meet me in this dark entry; how shall I pass through this dark entry into another world?

4. For by reason of guilt, and a shaking of conscience, *His life will hang in continual doubt before him, and he shall be afraid day and night*, Deut. xxiii. 66, 67. and shall have no assurance of his life.

5. Now also want will come up against him, he will come like an armed man: there is a terrible

terrible army to him that is graceless in heart, and fruitless in life. This want will continually cry in thine ears, here is a new birth wanting, a new heart, and a new spirit, wanting: Here is faith, love and repentance, the fear of God, and a good conversation, wanting: *Thou art weighed in the ballance and art found wanting*, Dan. v. 27.

6. Together with these, stand by the companions of death and hell, death and devils, death and endless torment in the everlasting flames of devouring fire. *When God shall come up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops*, Habak. iii. 6.

But how will this man die? can his heart now endure, or can his hands be strong? Ezek. xxii. 14.

1. God, and Christ, and pity have left him; sin against light, against mercy, and the long-suffering of God, is come up against him; his hope and confidence now lye a dying by him, and his conscience totters and shakes continually within him.

2. Death is at this work, cutting of him down, hewing both back and heart, both body and soul asunder: The man groines, but death hears him not; he looks ghastly, carefully, dejectedly, he sighs, he sweats, he trembles, but death matters nothing.

3. Fearful cogitations haunt him, misgivings, direful apprehensions of God terrify him:

now

now he hath time to think what the loss of heaven will be, and what the torments of hell will be; now he looks no way but he is frightened.

4. Now would he live, but may not; he would live, though it were but the life of a bed-ridden man, but must not. He that cuts him down sways him, as the seller of wood sways the tottering tree: now this way, then that: at last a root breaks, an heart-string, an eye-string snaps asunder.

5. And now could the soul be annihilated, or brought to nothing, how happy would it count itself: but it sees that it may not be. Wherefore it is put to a wonderful strait: stay in the body it may not, go out of the body it dares not. Life is going, the blood settles in the flesh; and the lungs being no more able to draw breath through the nostrils, at last out goes the weary trembling soul, who is immediately seized by the devils, who ly lurking in every hole in the chamber for that very purpose: His friends take care of the body, wrap it up in the sheets or coffin; but the soul is out of their thought and reach, going down to the chambers of death.

I had thought to have enlarged, but I forbear: God, who teaches men to profit, bless this brief and plain discourse to thy soul, who yet standest a professor in the land of the living, among the trees of his garden.
Amen.

A N
E X H O R T A T I O N
T O
P E A C E and U N I T Y.

EPH. iv. 3. *Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

BELOVED, religion is the great bond of human society, and it were well if itself were kept within the bond of unity; and that it may be so, let us, according to the text, use our utmost endeavours to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

These words contain a counsel and caution; the counsel is, that we endeavour the unity of the Spirit; the caution is, that we do it in the bond of peace: As if he should say, I would have you live in unity, but yet I would have you to be careful, and that you do not purchase unity with breach of charity.

Let us therefore be caution'd that we do not so press after unity in practice and opinion, as to break the bond of peace and affection.

In handling of these words, I shall observe this method.

First,

First, I shall open the sense of the text.

Secondly, I shall shew wherein this unity and peace consist.

Thirdly, I shall shew you the fruits and benefits of it together with nine inconveniencies and mischiefs that attend those churches where unity and peace are wanting.

Fourthly, and lastly, I shall give you twelve directions and motives for the obtaining of them.

First, As touching the sense of the text : When we are counselled to keep the unity of the Spirit, we are not to understand the Spirit of God, as personally so considered ; because the Spirit of God in that sense, is not capable of being divided ; and so there would be no need for us to endeavour to keep the unity.

By the unity of the Spirit then, we are to understand, that unity of mind which the Spirit of God calls for, and requires Christians to endeavour after ; hence it is that we are exhorted, by one spirit, with one mind, to strive together for the faith of the gospel, Phil. i. 27. But further, the apostle in these words alludes to the state and composition of a natural body ; and thereby informs us, that the mystical body of Christ holds an analogy with the natural body of a man : As,

1. In the natural body there must be a spirit to animate it, for the body without the spirit is dead, James ii. 26. So it is in the mystical

body of Christ; the apostle no sooner tells us of that one body, but he minds us of that one spirit, Eph. iv. 4.

2. The body hath joints and bands to unite all the parts; so hath the mystical body of Christ, Col. ii. 19. This is that bond of peace mentioned in the text, as also in the 16th ver. of the same chapter, where the whole body is said to be fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth.

3. The natural body receives counsel and nourishment from the head, so doth the mystical body of Christ, he is their counsellor, and him they must hear; hence it is that the apostle complaineth, Col. ii. 19. of some that did not hold the head, from which the whole body by joints and bands hath nourishment.

4. The natural body cannot well subsist if either the spirit be wounded, or the joints broken or dislocated: the body cannot bear a wounded or broken spirit. A broken spirit drieth the bones, Prov. xvii. 22. and a wounded spirit who can bear? Prov. xviii. 14. and on the other hand, how often have the disjoinings, of the body, and the breaking thereof, occasioned the expiration of the Spirit? In like manner it fares with the mystical body of Christ, how do divided spirits break the bond of peace, which are the joints of his body; and how do the breakings of the body and church of Christ wound the spirit of Christians, and

and oftentimes occasion the spirit and life of Christianity to languish, if not to expire? How needful is it then that we endeavour the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Secondly, I now come to shew you wherein this peace and unity consist, and this I shall demonstrate in five particulars.

1. This unity and peace may consist in the ignorance of many truths, and in the holding of some errors; or else this duty of peace and unity could not be practicable by any on this side perfection; but we must now endeavour the unity of the spirit, till we come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, Eph. iv. 13. Because now (as the apostle saith) we know in part and prophesy in part, and now we see through a glass, darkly, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. And as this is true in general, so we may find it true, if we descend to particular instances; the disciples seem to be ignorant of that great truth, which they had often and in much plainness been taught, by their master once and again, viz. That his kingdom was not of this world, and that in the world he should suffer, and be persecuted; yet in Acts. i. 16. we read, that they asked of him, *If he would at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?* Thereby discovering that Christ's kingdom (as they thought) should consist in his temporal jurisdiction over Israel, which they expected should now commence

and take place among them. Again, our Lord tells them, that he had many things to say, (and these were many important truths) which they could not now bear, John xvi. 12. and that these were important truths, appears by ver. 10, 11. where he is discoursing of righteousness and judgment; and then adds, That he had yet many things to say, which they could not bear: and thereupon promises the Comforter to lead them into all truth: which implies, that they were yet ignorant of many truths, and consequently held divers errors; and yet for all this he prays for and presses them to their great duty of peace and unity, John xiv. 27. and xvii. 21. To this may be added that of Heb. v. 11. where the author saith, He had many things to say of the priestly office of Christ, which, by reason of their dulness, they were not capable to receive; as also that in Acts x. where Peter seems to be ignorant of that truth, viz. That the gospel was to be preached to all nations; and contrary thereunto, he erred, in thinking it unlawful to preach amongst the Gentiles. I shall add two texts more, one in Acts. i. 9. where we read that those disciples which had been disciplined and baptized by John, were yet ignorant of the holy Ghost, and knew not (as the text tells us) whether there were any holy Ghost or no, tho' John did teach constantly, That he that should come after him should baptize

baptize with the holy Ghost and with fire. From hence we may easily and plainly infer, That Christians may be ignorant of many truths, by reason of weak and dull capacities, and other such like impediments, even while those truths are, with much plainness delivered to them. Again, we read, Heb. v. 13. of some that were unskilful in the word of righteousness, who nevertheless are called babes in Christ, and with whom unity and peace are to be inviolably kept and maintained.

2. As this peace and unity may consist in the ignorance of many truths, and in the holding of some errors, so it must with, (and it cannot consist without) the believing and practising those things which are necessary to salvation and church communion; and they are, First, Believing that Christ the Son of God died for the sins of men. Secondly, That whoever believeth, ought to be baptized; the third thing essential to this communion, is an holy and blameless conversation.

First, That believing that the Son of God died for the sins of men, is necessary to salvation, I prove by those texts which tell us, that he that doth not believe shall be damned, Mark xvi. 16. John iii. 36. Rom. x. 19.

That it is also necessary to church communion, appears from Mat. xvii. 16, 17, 18. Peter having confest that Christ was the Son of the living God, Christ thereupon assures

him, *That upon this rock, viz. this profession of faith, or this Christ which Peter had confessed, he would build his church, and the gates of hell should not prevail against it.* And 1 Cor. iii. 11. the apostle having told the Corinthians they were God's building, presently adds, that they could not be built upon any foundation but that which was laid, which was Christ Jesus. All which proves, that Christian society is founded upon the profession of Christ. And not only scripture, but the laws of right reason dictate this, that some rules and orders must be observed for the founding of all society, which must be consented to by all that will be of it; hence it comes to pass, that to own Christ as the Lord and head of Christians, is essential to the founding of Christian society.

Secondly, The scriptures have declared that this faith gives the professors of it a right to baptism as in the case of the eunuch; Acts viii. when he demanded why he might not be baptized? Philip answers, that if he believed with all his heart he might: the eunuch thereupon confessing Christ, was baptized.

Now that baptism is essential to church-communion, I prove from 1 Cor. xii. where we shall find the apostle labouring to prevent an evil use that might be made of spiritual gifts, as thereby to be puffed up; and to think that such as wanted them, were not of the
body

body or to be esteemed members; he thereupon resolves that whoever did confess Christ, and own him for his head, did it by the Spirit, verse 23 and not only because they have by the guidance and direction of the same Spirit been baptized, verse 13. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, &c. I need not go about to confute that notion that some of late have had of this text, *viz.* That the baptism here spoken of, is the baptism of the Spirit, because you have not owned and declared that notion as your judgment. But on the contrary, all of you that I have conversed with, have declared it to be understood of baptism with water by the direction of the Spirit; if so, then it follows, that men and women are declared members of Christ's body by baptism, and cannot be by scripture reputed and esteemed so without it; which further appears from Rom. vi. 5. where men by baptism are said to be planted into the likeness of his death; and Col. ii. 12. we are said to be buried with him by baptism: all which, together with the consent of all Christians, (some few in these late times excepted) do prove that baptism is necessary to the initiating persons into the church of Christ.

Thirdly, Holiness of life is essential to church communion, because it seems to be the reason why Christ founded a church in the world, *viz.* That men might thereby be watch-

ed over, and kept from falling, that if any be overtaken with a fault, he that is spiritual might restore him: that by this means men and women might be preserved without blame to the coming of Christ; *And the grace of God teacheth us to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and uprightly in this present evil world, Tit ii. 11, 12. And let every one that names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity, 2 Tim ii. 19. And James tells us (speaking of the Christian religion) That pure religion, and undefiled before God, is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, James i. 27.* From all which (together with many more texts that might be produced) it appears, that an ungodly and profane life, is inconsistent with Christian religion and society: and that holiness is essential to salvation and church communion: So that these three things, faith, baptism, and a holy life, as I said before, all churches must agree and unite in, as those things, which when wanting, will destroy their being. And let not any think, that when I say, believing the Son of God died for the sins of men, is essential to salvation and church communion, that I hereby would exclude all other articles of the Christian creed, as not necessary as the belief of the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment, &c. which, for want of time

I omit

I omit to speak particularly to, and the rather, because I understand this great article of believing the Son of God died for the sins of men, is comprehensive of all others, and is that from whence all other articles may easily be inferred.

And here I would not be mistaken, as tho' I held there were nothing else for Christians to practise, when I say this is all that is requisite to church-communion; for I very well know that Christ requires many other things of us, after we are members of his body, which, if we knowingly or maliciously refuse, may be the cause not only of excommunication, but damnation; but yet these are such things as relate to the well being, and not to the being of churches; as laying on of hands in the primitive times upon believers, by which they did receive the gifts of the Spirit: (this I say) was for the increase and edifying of the body, and not that thereby they might become of the body of Christ, for that they were before. And do not think that I believe laying on of hands was no apostolical institution, because, I say, men are thereby made members of Christ's body, or because, I say, that it is not essential to the church communion; why should I be thought to be against a fire in the chimney, because I say it must not be in the thatch of the house? Consider then how pernicious a thing it is to make every doctrine (though

true) the bond of communion. This is that which destroys unity, and by this rule all men must be perfect before they can be in peace. For do we not see daily that as soon as men come to a clearer understanding of the mind of God (to say the the best of what they hold) that presently all men are excommunicable, if not damnable, that do not agree with them? Do not some believe and see that to be pride and covetousness, which others do not because (it may be) they have more narrowly and diligently searched into their duty of these things than others have? What then must all men that have not so large acquaintance of their duty therein, be excommunicated? Indeed it were to be wished that more moderation in apparel and secular concernments were found among churches; but God forbid, that if they should come short herein, that we should say as one lately said, that he could not communicate with such people, because they were proud and superfluous in their apparel.

Let me appeal to such, and demand of them if there was not a time since they believed and were baptized, wherein they did not believe the laying on of hands a duty? And did they not then believe, and do they not still believe they were members of the body of Christ? And was there not a time when you did not so well understand the nature and extent of pride and covetousness as now you do? And did

did you not then believe, and do you not still believe, that you were true members of Christ, tho' less perfect? Why then should you not judge of those that differ from you therein, as you judged of yourselves when you were as they now are? How needful then is it for Christians to distinguish (if ever they would be at peace and unity) between those truths which are essential to the church-communion, and those that are not?

Fourthly, Unity and peace consist in our making one shoulder, to practise and put in execution the things we do know, Phil. iii. 16. *Nevertheless wherein we have attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things.* How sad is it to see our zeal consume us, and our precious time in things doubtful and disputable while we are not concerned, nor affected with the practice of those indisputable things we all agree in? We all know charity to be the great command, and yet how few agree to practise it: We all know they that labour in the word and doctrine, are worthy of double honour; and that God hath ordained that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel, these duties however others have cavilled at them, I know you agree in them, and are persuaded of your duty herein; but where is your zeal to practise? O how well would it be with churches, if they were but half as zealous for the great
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and plain, and indisputable things, and the more chargeable and costly things of religion, as they are for things doubtful or less necessary, or that are no charge to them, and cost nothing but the breath of contention, though that may be too great a price for the small things they purchase with it?

But further, do we not agree, that men that preach the gospel, should do it like workmen that need not be ashamed? and yet how little is this considered by many preachers, who never consider before they speak, of what they say, or whereof they affirm? How few give themselves to study that they may be approved? How few meditate and give themselves to these things, that their profiting may appear to all?

For the Lord's sake, let us unite to practise those things we know; and if we would have more talents let us all agree to improve those we have.

See the spirit was among the primitive professors, that knowing and believing how much it concerned them in the propagation of christianity, to shew forth love to one another (that so all might know them to be Christ's disciples) rather than there should be any complainings among them, they sold all they had: O how zealous were these to practise, and with the one shoulder to do what was upon their hearts for God! I might further add, how

how often have we agreed in our judgment; and hath it not been upon our hearts, that this and the other thing is good to be done, to enlighten the dark world, and to repair the breaches of churches, and to raise up those churches that now ly a-gasping, and among whom the soul of religion is expiring? But what do we more than talk of them? Do not most decline these things, when they either call for their purses, or their persons to help in this and such like works as these? Let us then, in what we know, unite that we may put it in practice, remembring that if we know these things, we shall be happy if we do them.

Fifthly, This unity and peace consist in our joining and agreeing to pray for and to press after those truths we do not know. The disciples in the primitive times were conscious of their imperfections, and therefore with one accord continued in prayer and supplications. If we were more in the sense of our own ignorances and imperfections, we should carry it better towards these that differ from us; then we should abound more in the spirit of meekness and forbearance, that thereby we might bring others (or be brought by others) to the knowledge of the truth: This would make us go to God and say with Elihu, Job xxxiv. 33. That which we know not teach thou us. Brethren, did we but all agree that we erred in many things we should soon agree
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to go to God, and pray for more wisdom and revelation of his mind and will concerning us.

But here's our misery, that we no sooner receive any thing for truth but we presently ascend the chair of infallibility with it, as though in this we could not err: Hence it is we are impatient of contradiction, and become uncharitable to those that are not of the same mind; but now a consciousness that we may mistake, or that if my brother err in one thing, I may err in another will unite us in affection, and engage us to press after perfection, according to that of the apostle, Phil. iii. 4, 5. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal this unto you. O then that we could but unite, and agree to go to God for one another, in confidence that he will teach us; and that if any of us want wisdom (as who of us does not?) we might ask of God, who gives to all men liberally, and upbraids no man. Let us, like those people spoken of in Isa. ii. say one to another, Come let us go to the Lord, for he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.

Sixthly, This unity and peace mainly consist

sist in unity of love and affection; this is the great and indispensable duty of all Christians, by this they are declared Christ's disciples; and hence it is that love is called the great commandment, the old commandment, and the new commandment, that which was commanded in the beginning, and will remain unto the end, yea, and after the end, 1 Cor. xiii. 8. *Charity never fails: but whether there be tongues, they shall cease; or whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away, and* ver. 13. *And now abideth faith, hope and charity: but the greatest of these is charity.* And Col. iii. 14. *Above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfection.* Because charity is the end of the commandment, 1 Tim. i. 5 Charity therefore is called, The royal law, and has a superintendency over other laws, and doubtless, is a law to which others must give place, when they come in competition with it: *Above all things therefore have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity covereth a multitude of sins,* 1 Pet. iv. 8. Let us therefore live in unity and peace, and the God of love and peace will be with us.

That you may so do, let me remember you (in the words of a learned man) "That the unity of the church, is an unity of love and affection; and not a bare uniformity of practice and opinion."

3. Having

3. Having shewn you wherein this unity consists, I come to the third general thing propounded, and that is, to shew the fruits and benefits of unity and peace; together with the mischiefs and inconveniences attending those churches where unity and peace are wanting.

1st, Unity and peace is a duty well pleasing to God, who is stiled the author of peace and not of confusion in all the churches: God's Spirit rejoices in the unity of our spirits. But, on the other hand, where strife and divisions are, there the Spirit of God is grieved. Hence it is that the apostle no sooner forbids the Ephesians to grieve the Spirit of God, but he presently subjoins as a remedy against that evil, *That they put away bitterness and evil-speaking; and be kind one to another, and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven them*, Eph. iv. 30, 31.

2. As unity and peace are pleasing to God, and rejoice his Spirit, so they rejoice the hearts and spirits of God's people. Unity and peace bring heaven down upon earth among us. Hence it is the apostle tells us, Rom. iv. 17. *That the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the holy Ghost*. Where unity and peace are, there is heaven upon earth: By this we taste the first fruits of that blessed estate we shall one day live in the fruition of when we shall come to the

the general assembly, and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. xii. 33.

This outward peace of the church (as a learned man observes) distils into peace of conscience, and turns writings and readings of controversy, into treatises of mortification and devotion.

And the Psalmist tells us, It is not only good, but pleasant, for brethren, to dwell together in unity. Psalm cxxxiii. 1. But where unity and peace are wanting, there are storms and troubles: *Where envy and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.* James iii. 16. It is the outward peace of the church that increases our outward joy: and the peace of God's house gives us the occasion to eat our meat with gladness in our own houses, Acts ii. 46.

3. The unity and peace of the church make communion of saints desirable. What is it that imbitters church-communion; and makes it burdensome, but divisions? Have they not heard many complain that they are weary of church-communion, because of church contention? But now where unity and peace is, there Christians long for communion.

David saith, That he was glad when they said unto him, Let us go into the house of God, Psalm cxxii. 1. Why was this but because (as the 3d verse tells us) Jerusalem was a city compact

pact together, where the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord, to give thanks to his name? And David speaking of the man that was once his friend, thereby lets us know the benefit of peace and unity, Psalm lv. 14. We saith he, took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company. Where unity is strongest, communion is sweetest and most desirable. You see then that peace and unity fill the people of God with desires after communion. But, on the other hand, hear how David complains, Psalm cxx. 5. *Wo is me, I sojourn in Mesek, and that I dwell in the tents of Kedar.* The Psalmist here is thought to allude to a sort of men that dwelt in the deserts of Arabia, that got their livings by contention; and therefore he adds ver. 6. That his soul had dwelt long with them that hated peace. This was that which made him long for the courts of God, and esteem one day in his house better than a thousand elsewhere; this made his soul even faint for the house of God, because of the peace of it: *Blessed are they* (said he) *that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee.* There is a certain note of concord, as appears, Acts ii. where we read of primitive Christians, meeting with one accord praising God.

4. Where unity and peace are, there many mischiefs and inconveniencies are prevented, which attend those people where peace and unity

unity are wanting: And of these many that might be mentioned, I shall briefly insist upon these nine.

1. Where unity and peace are wanting, there is much precious time spent to no purpose: how many days are spent, and how many fruitless journeys made to no profit, where the people are not in peace? How often have many redeemed time (even in seed time and harvest) when they could scarce afford it, to go to church, and by the reason of their divisions, come home worse than they went, repenting they have spent so much precious time to so little benefit? How sad is it to see men spend their precious time, in which they should work out their salvation, by labouring, as in the fire, to prove an uncertain and doubtful proposition; and to trifle away their time, in which they should make their calling and election sure to make sure of an opinion, which, when they have done all, are not infallibly certain whether it be true or no, because all things that are necessary to salvation and church communion are plainly laid down in scripture, in which we may be infallibly sure of the truth of them? But for other things that we have no plain text for, but the truth of them depends upon our interpretations, we must be cautioned, that we do not spend much time in imposing them upon, or venting among others, unless we can assume infallibility; otherwise
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we spend time upon uncertainty. And whoever cast their eyes abroad, and open their ears to intelligence, shall both see, and to their sorrow hear, that many churches spend most of their time in jangling and contending about those things which are neither essential to salvation or church communion; and which is worse, about such unity and peace; are our times spent in praising God, and in those great questions, What shall we do to be saved? And how we may be more holy and more humble towards God, and more charitable, and more serviceable to one another?

2. Where unity and peace are wanting, there is evil-surmising, and evil speaking, to the damage and disgrace, if not to the ruin of one another, Gal. v. 14, 15. The whole law is fulfilled in one word, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; but if ye bite and devour one another, take heed ye be not consumed one of another. No sooner is the bond of charity broken, which is as a wall about Christians, but soon they begin to make havoc and spoil of one another; then there is raising evil reports, and taking up evil reports against each other: hence it is that whispering and backbiting proceeds, and goes from house to house to blazon the faults and infirmities of others; hence it is that we watch for the haltings of one another, and do inwardly rejoice at the miscarriages of others, saying

laying in our hearts, Ah, ah, so we would have it. But now where unity and peace are, there is charity; and where charity is, we are all willing to hide the faults, and cover the nakedness of our brethren. Charity thinketh no evil, 1 Cor. xiii. 5. And therefore it cannot surmize, neither will it speak evil.

3. Where unity and peace are wanting, there can be no great matters enterprized, we cannot do much for God, nor much for one another. When the devil would hinder the bringing to pass of good in nations and churches, he divides their counsels, and (as one well observes) he divides their heads, that he may divide their hands. When Jacob had prophesied of the cruelty of Simeon and Levi, who were brethren, he threatens them with the consequent of it, Gen. xlix. 7. I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel. The devil is not to learn that maxim he hath taught the machiavelians of the world, *diviae & impera*, divide and rule: It is an united force that is formidable. Hence the spouse in the Canticles is said to be but one, and the only one of her mother, Cant. vi. 9. Hereupon it is said of her verse 10. That she is terrible as an army with banners. What can a divided army do, or a discorded army that have lost their banners, or for fear or shame, thrown them away? In like manner, what can Christians do for Christ, and the enlarging

larging his dominions in the world, in bringing men from darkness to light, while themselves are divided and disordered? Peace is to Christians, as great rivers are to some cities, which (beside other benefits and commodities) are natural fortifications, by reason whereof those places are made impregnable; but when by the subtilty of an adversary, or the folly of the citizens, these waters come to be divided into little petty rivulets, how soon are they assailed and taken? Thus it fares with churches, when once the devil, or their own folly, divides them, they will be so far from resisting of him, that they will be soon subjected by him.

Peace is to churches as walls to cities; nay, unity hath defended cities that had no walls; it was once demanded of Agesilaus, why Lacedemon had no walls? He answers (pointing back to the city) "That the concord of the citizens was the strength of the city." In like manner are Christians strong when united; then they are more capable to resist temptation, and to succour such as are tempted; when unity and peace is among the churches, then are they like a walled town; and when peace is the church's wall, salvation will be her bulwarks.

- Plutarch tells us of one Silurus that had eighty sons, whom he called to him as he lay on his death-bed, and gave them a sheaf of arrows

arrows, thereby to signify, that if they lived in unity, they might do much, but if they divided, they would come to nothing. If Christians were all one piece, if they were but all one lump, or but one sheaf or bundle, how great are the things they might do for Christ and his people in the world, whereas otherwise, they can do little but dishonour and offend him.

It is reported of the leviathan that his strength is in his scales, Job xli. 15, 16, 17. *His scales are his pride shut up together as with a close seal; one is so near to another, that no air can come between them; they join together; they stick together, they cannot be sundred.* If the church of God were united like the scales of the leviathan, it would not be every brain-sick-nation, nor angry speculation, that would cause their separation.

Solomon saith, Two are better than one, because if one fall, the other may raise him; then surely twenty are better than two, and an hundred are better than twenty, for the same reason, because they are more capable to help one another. If ever Christians would do any thing to raise up the fallen tabernacle of Jacob, and to strengthen the weak and comfort the feeble, and to fetch back those that have gone astray, it must be by unity.

We read of the men of Babel, Gen. xi. 6. The Lord saith, *Behold the people are one, &c.*

And now nothing will be restrained from them that they imagined to do.

We learn by reason what great things may be done in worldly achievements where unity is: and shall not reason (assisted with the motives of religion) teach us, that unity among Christians may enable them to enterprize greater things for Christ? Would not this make Satan fall from heaven like lightning? For as unity built literal Babel, it is unity that must pull down mystical Babel. And on the other hand where divisions are, there is confusion; by this means a Babel hath been built in every age. It hath been observed by a learned man, and I wish I could not say truly, "That there is most of Babel and confusion among those that cry out most against it." If we would have a hand to destroy Babylon, let's have a heart to unite one among another.

Our English histories tell us, that after Austin the monk had been sometime in England, he heard of some of the remains of the British Christians, which he conveened to a place, which Cambden in his Britannia calls Austin's oak: Here they met to consult about matters of religion; but such was their division, by reason of Austin's imposing spirit, that our stories tell us, That synod was famous for this, That they only met and did nothing. This is the mischief of divisions, they hinder the doing of much good; and if Christians
that

that are divided, be ever famous for any thing, it will be, that they have often met together, and talked of this and that thing, but did nothing.

Where unity and peace are wanting, there the weak are wounded, and the wicked are hardened: unity may well be compared to precious oil, Psalm cxxxiii. 2. It is the nature of oil to heal that which is wounded, and to soften that which is hard. Those that have hardened themselves against God, and his people, when they shall behold unity and peace among them, will say, God is in them indeed. And on the other hand are they not ready to say when they see you divided, That the devil is in you that you cannot agree?

5. Divisions and want of peace, keep those out of the church that would come in, and cause many to go out that are in.

The divisions of Christians (as learned men observe) are a scandal to the Jews, an opprobrium to the Gentiles, and an inlet to atheism and infidelity. Insomuch that our controversies about religion (especially as they have of late been managed) have made religion itself become a controversy. O then, how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! The unity and peace among the primitive Christians, drew others to them: What hinders the conversion of the Jews, but the divisions of Christians? Must I be a

Christian, says the Jew? What Christian must I be? What sect must I be of? The Jews (as one notes) glossing upon that text in Isa. xi. 6. where it is prophesied, That the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and that their shall be none left to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain; and interpreting those sayings to signify the concord and peace that shall be among the people that shall own the Messiah, do hence conclude, that the Messiah is not yet come, because of the contentions and divisions that are among those that profess him. And the apostle saith 1 Cor. xii. 23. That if an unbeliever should see their disorders, he would say they were mad; but where unity and peace are, there the churches are multiplied. We read, Acts ix. that when the churches had rest, they multiplied; and Acts ii. 46, 47. when the church was serving God with one accord, the Lord added to them daily such as should be saved.

It is unity that brings men into the church, and divisions that bring them out. It is reported of an Indian passing by the house of a Christian, and hearing them contending, being desired to turn in, he refused, saying, *Habamack* dwells there, meaning that the devil dwelt there: But where unity and peace are, there God is; and he that dwells in love dwells in God. The apostle tells the Corinthians, that if they walked orderly, even the unbeliever

unbeliever would hereby been forced to come and worship, and say, God was in them indeed, And we read, Zech. viii. 23. of a time when ten men shall take hold of a Jew, and say, *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.*

And hence it is that Christ prays, John xvii. 21. That his disciples might be one, as the Father and he were one, that the world might believe the Father sent him: As if he should say, You may preach me as long as you will, and to little purpose, if you are not at peace and unity among yourselves. Such was the unity of Christians in former days, that the intelligent heathen would say of them, That tho' they had many bodies, yet they had but one soul. And we hear the same of them, Acts iv. 23. *That the multitude of them that believed, were of one heart, and one soul.*

And as the learned Stillingfleet observes in his Irenicum, "The unity and peace that was
" then among Christians, made religion amiable
" in the judgment of impartial heathens: Chri-
" stians were then known by the benignity and
" sweetness of their dispositions, by the candor
" and ingenuity of their spirits, by their mutual
" love, forbearance, and condescension to one
" another." But either this is not the practice
of Christianity; viz. a duty Christians are now
bound to observe, or else it is not calculated
for our meridian, where the spirits of men are

of too high an elevation for it: For if pride and uncharitableness, divisions, and strife, wrath and envy, animosities, and contentions, were but the marks of true Christians. Diogenes never need light his lamp at noon to find out such among us; but if a spirit of meekness, gentleness and condescension, a stooping to the weakness and infirmities of one another, a pursuit after peace, when it flies from us, be the indispensable duties, and characteristical notes of Christians, it may possibly prove a difficult inquest to find out such, for the crowds of those that shelter themselves under that glorious name.

It is the unity and peace of churches that bring others to them, and make Christianity amiable. What is prophesied of the churches of the Jews, may, in this place be applied to the Gentile church, Isa. lxvi. 12. That when once God extendeth peace to her like a river, the Gentiles shall come in like a flowing stream: then, (and not till then) the glory of the Lord shall arise upon his churches, and his glory shall be seen among them; then shall their hearts fear and be enlarged, because the abundance of the nations shall be converted to them.

6. As want of unity and peace keep those out of the church that would come in, so it hinders the growth of those that are in; jars and divisions, wranglings and prejudices, eat out

out the growth, if not the life of religion. These are those waters of Marah, that imbitter our spirits, and quench the Spirit of God. Unity and peace are said to be like the dew of Hermon, and as a dew that descended upon Sion, where the Lord commanded his blessing, Psalm cxxxiii. 3.

Divisions run religion into briars and thorns, contentions and parties, divisions are to churches like wars in countries: Where war is the ground lies untill'd, none takes care of it. It is love that edifieth, but division pulleth down: Divisions are as the north east wind to the fruits, which causes them dwindle away to nothing; but when the storm is over, every thing begins to grow. When men are divided, they seldom speak the truth in love, and then no marvel they grow not up to him in all things, which is the head.

It is a sad presage of an approaching famine, (as one well observes) not of bread nor water, but of hearing the word of God, when the thin ears of corn devour the full plump ones; when the lean kine devour the fat ones; when our controversies about doubtful things, and things of less moment, eat up our zeal for the more indisputable and practical things in religion; which gives us cause to fear, that this will be our character by which our age will be known to posterity, that it was the age that talked of religion most, and loved it least.

Look upon those churches where peace is, and there you shall find prosperity: when the churches had rest, they not only multiplied, but walking in the fear of the Lord, and the comforts of the holy Ghost, they were edified; it is when the whole body is knit together, as with joints and bands, that they increase with the increase of God.

We are at a stand sometimes, why there is so little growth among the churches, why men have been so long in learning, and are yet so far from attaining the knowledge of the truth; some have given one reason and some another; some say pride is the cause, and others say covetousness is the cause; I wish I could say these were no causes: But I observe, that when God entered his controversy with his people of old, he mainly insisted upon some one sin, as idolatry, and shedding innocent blood, &c. as comprehensive of the rest; not but they were guilty of other sins, but those that were most capital, are particularly insisted on. In like manner, whoever would but take a review of churches that live in contentions and divisions, may easily find that breach of unity and charity is their capital sin, and occasion of all other sins; no marvel then, that the scripture saith, The whole law is fulfilled in love; and if so, then where love is wanting, it follows, the whole law is broken. It is where love grows cold, that sin abounds; and therefore

fore the want of unity and peace is the cause of that leanness and barrenness that is among us: it is true in spirituals as well as temporals, that peace brings plenty.

7. Where unity and peace are wanting, our prayers are hindred: the promise is, That we shall agree to ask, shall be given us of our heavenly Father. No marvel we pray and pray, and yet are not answered; it is because we are not agreed what to have.

It is reported, that the people in Macedonia, coming to make supplications to their idol-god, some of them asked for rain, and others of them asked for fair weather: the oracle returns them this answer, that they should go first and agree among themselves; would a heathen god refuse to answer such prayers, in which the supplicants were not agreed; and shall we think the true God will answer them?

We see then that divisions hinder our prayers, and lays then a prohibition on our sacrifice: *If thou bring thy gift to the altar, (saith Christ) and there remember that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave thy gift, and go first and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer it.* So that want of unity and charity hinders even our particular prayers and devotions.

This hindred the prayers and fastings of the people of old from finding acceptance, Isa. lviii. 3. the people ask the reason wherefore they fasted, and God did not see nor take

notice of them? He gives this reason, *Because they fasted for strife and debate, and hid their face from their own flesh.* Again, Isa. lix. the Lord saith, *His hand was not shortned, that he could not save, nor his ear heavy, that he could not hear, but their sins had separated between their God and them.* And among those many sins they stood chargeable with, this was none of the least, viz. *that the way of peace they had not known.* You see where peace was wanting prayers were hindred, both under the old and new testament.

The sacrifice of the people, in Isa. lxxv. that said, *Stand further off, I am holier than thou; was a smoke in the nostrils of the Lord.* On the other hand we read how acceptable those prayers were that were made with one accord, Acts iv. 24. with 31. *They prayed with one accord, and they were all of one heart, and of one soul,* and see the benefit of it, *They were all filled with the holy Ghost, and spoke the word with all boldness:* Which was the very thing they prayed for, as appears, ver. 29. And the apostle exhorts the husband to dwell with his wife, *that their prayers might not be hindred,* 1 Pet. iii. 7. We see then, want of unity and peace, either in families or churches, is an hindrance of prayers.

8. It is a dishonour and disparagement to Christ, that his family should be divided. When an army falls into mutiny and division, it reflects disparagement on him that has the

the conduct of it: in like manner the divisions of families are a dishonour to the heads, and those that govern them. And if so, then how greatly do we dishonour our Lord and governor, who gave his body to be broken, to keep his church from breaking, who prayed for their peace and unity, and left peace at his departing for them for a legacy, even a peace which the world could not bestow upon them?

9. Where there are peace and unity, there is sympathy with each other; that which is the want of one, will be the want of all: *Who is afflicted* (says the apostle) *and I burn not? We should then remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity; as being ourselves also in the body,* Heb. xiii. 3. But here the body is broken, or men are not reckoned or esteemed of the body, no marvel we are so little affected with such as are afflicted; where divisions are, that which is joy of the one is the grief of another; but where unity, peace and charity abound, there we shall find Christians mourning with them that mourn, and rejoicing with them that rejoice; then they will not envy the prosperity of others, nor rejoice at the miseries or miscarriages of any.

Lastly, I shall give fourteen directions and motives for obtaining peace and unity.

1. If we would live in peace and unity, we must pray for them. We are required to seek

peace, of whom then can we seek it with hopes to find it, but of him who is a God of peace; and has promised to bless his people with it? God has promised to give his people one heart and one way; for all these things, he will be fought unto.

The peace of churches is what the apostle prays for in all his epistles: in which his desire is, that grace and peace may be multiplied and increased among them.

2. They that would endeavour the peace of the churches, must be careful who they commit the care and oversight of the churches to; as first (over and besides the qualifications that should be in all Christians) they that rule the church of God, should be men of counsel and understanding. Where an ignorant ministry is, commonly is an ignorant people, according as it was of old, *Like priests, like people.*

How sad is it to see the church of God committed to the care of such that pretend to be teachers of others, yet understand not what they say, or whereof they affirm? no marvel the peace of churches is broken, when their watchmen want skill to preserve unity, which of all things is as the church's wall; when they are divided, no wonder they crumble to atoms, if there is no skilful physician to heal them. It is sad when there is no balm in Gilead, and when there is no physician there. Hence it is, that the wounds of churches become

come incurable, like the wounds of God's people of old, either not healed at all, or else but slightly, and to no purpose. May it not be said of many churches at this day, as God said to the church of Israel, *That he sought for a man among them that should stand in the gap, and make up the breach, but he found none?*

Remember what was said of old, Mal. ii. 7. The priest's lips should preserve knowledge; and the people should seek the law at his mouth: but when this is wanting, the people will stumble, and depart from God and one another. Therefore God complains, Hof. iv. 6. *That his people were destroyed for want of knowledge:* That is, for want of knowing guides; for if the light in them that teach, be darkness, how great is that darkness? And if the blind lead the blind, no marvel both fall into the ditch.

How many be there that take upon them to teach other, who need be taught the beginning of religion; that instead of multiplying knowledge, multiply words without knowledge; and instead of making known God's counsel, darken counsel by words without knowledge? Some do more than darken counsel, for they wrest the counsel of God; 2 Pet. iii. 16. In Paul's epistles are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction. Some things

things in scripture, are hard to be known and they are made harder by such unlearned teachers, as utter their own notions by words without knowledge.

None are more bold to take upon them to expound the dark mysteries and sayings of the prophets and revelations, and 9th of the Romans, which I believe contains some of those many things which in Paul's epistles Peter saith, were hard to be understood: I say, none are more forward to dig in these mines, than those that can hardly give a sound reason for the first principles of religion; and such as are ignorant of many more weighty things, that are easily to be seen in the face, and superficies of the scripture. Nothing will serve these but swimming in the deeps, when they have not yet learned to wade thro' the shallows of the scriptures; like the Gnosticks of old, who thought they knew all things, tho' they knew nothing as they ought. And as those Gnosticks of old, so do such teachers of late, break the unity and peace of churches. How needful then is it, that, if we desire the peace of churches, we chuse out men of knowledge, who may be able to keep them from being shattered and scattered with every wind of doctrine; and who may be able to convince and stop the mouths of gain-sayers?

3. You must not only chuse men of counsel; but (if you design the unity and peace
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of the churches) men of courage to govern them: for as there must be wisdom to bear with some, so there must be courage to correct others: as some must be instructed meekly, so others must be rebuked sharply, that they may be sound in faith; there must be wisdom to rebuke some with long suffering, and courage to suppress and stop the mouths of others. The apostle tells Titus of some whose mouths must be stopped, or else they would subvert whole houses, Tit. i. 11. where this courage has been wanting, not only whole houses, but whole churches have been subverted. And Paul tells the Galatians, That when he saw some endeavour to bring the churches into bondage, that he did not give place to them, no not for an hour, &c. Gal. ii. 5. If this course had been taken with the rulers of churches, their peace had not been so often invaded by unruly and vain talkers.

4. In chusing men to rule (if you would endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace thereby) be careful you chuse men of peaceable dispositions. That which has much annoyed the peace of churches, has been the forward and perverse spirits of the rulers thereof, Solomon therefore advises, That with a furious man we should not go, lest we learn his ways, and get a snare to our souls, Prov. xxii. 24, 25. And with the forward we learn frowardness. How do some
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mens words eat like canker; who, instead of the lifting up their voice like a trumpet, to sound a parley for peace, have rather sounded an alarm to war and contention? If we would live in peace, let us reverence their feet that bring the glad tidings of it. O how have some made it their business to preach contentions, and upon entertaining of every novel opinion, to preach separation! How has God's word been stretched and torn to furnish these men with arguments to tear churches? Have not our ears heard these texts that say, Come out from among them, and be ye separate, &c. And withdraw from every brother that walks disorderly? I say, have we not heard these texts, that were written to prevent disorder, brought to countenance the greatest disorder in the church of God, even schism and division? Whereas one of these exhortations was written to the church of Corinth, to separate themselves from the idols temple and table, which many of them lived in the participation of, notwithstanding their profession of the true God; as appears 2 Cor. vi. 16, 17. compared with 1 Cor. viii. 7. 1 Cor. xiii. 14, 20, 22, and not for some members, who shall make themselves both judges and parties to separate, when, and as often as they please, from the whole congregation and church of God where they stood related; for, by the same rule, and on the same ground, may others

thers start new questions among these new separatists, and become judges of the communicableness of them, and thereupon make another separation from these, till at last two be not left to walk together. And for that other text mentioned, 2 Theff. v. 9. where Paul exhorts the church of Thessalonica to withdraw themselves from every brother that walks disorderly; I wonder that any should bring it to justify their separation, or withdrawing from the communion of a true (tho' a disorderly church) For, (1.) Consider that this was not writ for a few members to withdraw from the church, but for the church to withdraw from disorderly members. (2.) Consider, that if any offended member, on pretence of error either in doctrine or practice, should by this text become judges (as well as parties) of the grounds and lawfulness of their separation, then it would follow, that half a score notorious hereticks, or scandalous livers (when they have walked so as they foresee the church are ready to deal with, and withdraw from them) shall anticipate the church, and pretend somewhat against it, of which themselves must be judges, and so withdraw from it, pretending either heresy or disorder; and then condemn the church, to prevent the disgrace of being condemned by it. How needful then is it; that men of peaceable dispositions, and not of factious and dividing spirits,

spirits, be chosen to rule the church of God lest it be leavened and sowed by them.

5. As there must be care used in chusing men to rule the church, so we must consider that there are many things, darkly laid down in scripture; this will temper our spirits and make us live in peace and unity, the more firmly in things wherein we agree; this will help us to bear one another's burden, and so fulfil the law of Christ, in as much as all things necessary to salvation and church-communion are plain in scripture. And where things are more darkly laid down, we should consider that God intended hereby to stir up our diligence, that we might increase our knowledge and not our divisions: For it may be said of all discoveries of truth we have made in the scriptures as it is said of the globe of the earth, that tho' men have made great searches, and there-upon great discoveries, yet there is still a *Terra incognita*, an unknown land; so there is in the scripture; for after men have travelled over them, one age after another, yet still there is a *Terra incognita*, an unknown tract, to put us on farther search and enquiry, and keep us from censuring and falling out with those who have not yet made the same discoveries; so that we may say with David, when we reflect on our short apprehensions of the mind of God, *We have seen an end of all perfection, but God's commands are exceeding broad*; and

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(as one observes, speaking of the scriptures.) That there is a path in them leading to the mind of God, that lies far from the thoughts and apprehensions of men. And, on the other hand, in many other places, God sits, as it were, on the superficies, and the face of the letter, where he that runs may discern him speaking plainly, and no parable at all. How should the consideration of this induce us to a peaceable deportment toward those that differ from us?

6. If we would endeavour peace and unity, we must consider how God has tempered the body, that so the comely parts should not separate from the uncomely, as having no need of them, 1 Cor. xii. 22, — 25. There are in Christ's body an house, some members and vessels less honourable, 2 Tim. ii. 20. And therefore we should not, as some now a days, pour the more abundant disgrace, instead of putting the more abundant honour upon them; did we consider this, we should be covering the weakness, and hiding the miscarriages of one another, because we are all members of one another, and the most useless member is in its place useful.

7. If we would live in peace, let us remember our relations to God as children to a father, and to teach other as brethren. Will not the thoughts that we have one Father quiet us, and the thoughts that we are brethren

thren unite us? It was this made Abraham propose terms of peace to Lot, Gen. xii. Let there be no strife between us, for we are brethren. And we read of Moses, Acts vii. 46. using this argument to reconcile those that strove together, and to set them at one again, Sirs, ye are brethren, Why do ye wrong one another? A deep sense of this, that we are brethren, would keep us from dividing.

8. If we would preserve peace, let us mind the gifts, graces, and vertues that are in each other; let these be more in our eye than their failings and imperfections. When the Apostle exhorted the Philippians to peace, as a means hereunto, That so the peace of God might rule in your hearts, he tells them, Chap. iv. 8. *That if there were any vertue, or any praise, they should think of these things.* While we are always exposing the faults of one another, and spreading their infirmities, no marvel we are so little in peace and charity; for as charity covers a multitude of sins, so malice covers a multitude of virtues, and makes us deal by one another, as the heathen persecutors dealt with Christians, viz. Put them in bear-skins, that they might more easily become a prey to the dogs designed to devour them.

9. If we would keep unity and peace, let us lay aside provoking and dividing language, and forgive those that use it. Remember that
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old saying, Evil words corrupt good manners. When men think to carry all afore them, with speaking uncharitably and disgracefully of their brethren, or their opinions; may not such be answered, as Job answered his unfriendly visitants, Chap. vi. 25. How forcible are right words? But what do your arguings reprove? How healing are words fitly spoken? A word in season, how good is it? If we would seek peace, let us clothe all our treatises for peace with acceptable words; and where one word may better do than another, let that be used to express persons or things by: And let us not, as some do, call the different practices of our brethren, will-worship, and their different opinions, doctrines of devils, and the doctrine of Balaam, who taught fornication, &c. unless we can plainly and expressly prove it so. Such language as this has strangely divided our spirits, and hardned our hearts one towards another.

10. If we would live in peace, let us make the best construction of one another's words and actions. Charity judges best, and it thinks no evil. If words and actions may be well constructed, let us never put an ill construction upon them. How much has the peace of Christians been broken by uncharitable interpreting words and actions? As some lay to the charge of others, what they never said, so,
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by straining men's words, others lay to their charge what they never thought.

11. Be willing to hear, and obey those that God, by his providence has set over you; this is a great means to preserve the unity and peace of churches; but when men (nay sometimes women) shall usurp authority, and think themselves wiser than their teachers, no wonder, if they run into contentions and parties, and say, they are not free to hear those whom the church thinks fit to speak to them. This is the first step of schism, and is often attended with a sinful separation.

12. If you would keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, be mindful, that the God whom you serve is a God of peace, and your Saviour is a prince of peace; that his ways are pleasantness, and all his paths are peace; that Christ was sent to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death.

13. Consider, the oneness of spirit among the enemies of religion: Though they differ about other things, yet they will agree to persecute and extirpate religion out of the earth; the devils in the air, in the earth, in hell, and in the world, do all make one at this turn. Shall the devil's kingdom be united, and Christ's be divided? Shall the devils join to drive on the design of damning men, and Christians not unite to carry on the great design

design of saving them? Shall Papists agree to carry on their interest notwithstanding the multitudes of orders, degrees and difference among them? And shall not those that call themselves reformed churches unite, to carry on the common interest of Christ in the world, notwithstanding some petty and disputable differences among them? Quarrels about religion (as one observes) were sins not named among the Gentiles. What a shame is it then for Christians to abound in them, especially considering the nature of Christian religion, and what large provisions the Author of it has made to keep its professors in peace? In so much that it is next to a miracle, that ever any (especially the professors of it) should fall out about it.

14. Consider and remember that the Judge stands at the door; let this moderate our spirits, that the Lord is at hand. What a sad account will they have to make when he comes, that should be found to smite their fellow-servants, and make the way to this kingdom narrower than ever he made it? Let me close all with the words of St. Paul, 2 Cor. xiii. 11. *Finally, brethren, farewell; be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.*

P O S T.

P O S T S C R I P T.

READER, I thought good to advertise thee, that I have delivered this to thy hand, in the same order and method in which it was preached, and almost in the same words, without any diminishings, or considerable enlargings; unless it be in the fourteen last particulars; upon some of which I have made some enlargements, which I could not do then for want of time: But the substance of every one of them was then laid down in the same particular order as here thou hast them. And now I have done, I doubt not (to use the words of moderate men on the like occasion) it will fare with me, as it doth commonly with him that parts a fray; both parties may perhaps drive at me for wishing them no worse than peace: My ambition of the publick tranquillity of the church of God, I hope will carry me through these hazards; let both beat me, so their quarrels cease, I rejoyce in the blows and scars I shall take for the church's safety.

F I N I S.



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